



International
Olympic
Committee

The President

**Video message for the 47th Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Quadrennial panel discussion on promoting human rights through sport
and the Olympic ideal
For use on 7 July 2021**

Dear Madam Vice-President,

Dear Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights,

Distinguished delegates,

In only 16 days from now, when the athletes from 205 National Olympic Committees and the IOC Refugee Olympic Team finally come together for the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, they will send a powerful message to the world: the message of peace and solidarity.

Our mission is about these values and goes hand-in-hand with human rights, especially the most fundamental of human rights: peace.

Today, the Olympic Games are the only event that unites the entire world in peaceful competition.

At the Olympic Games, all people are equal regardless of their race, country of origin, gender, sexual orientation, social status, religion, or political belief. This principle of non-discrimination allows sport to promote peace and understanding among all people.

We can only achieve our peace mission through solidarity.

There is no peace without solidarity.

What the coronavirus pandemic has taught us the hard way is: We need more solidarity. More solidarity within societies and more solidarity among societies.

Solidarity means more than just respect or non-discrimination. Solidarity means actively helping, sharing and caring for one another. This is what we are doing within our remit of the Olympic Games. We care and share to support all the athletes from all the National Olympic Committees – big and small, rich and poor – assisting them and helping them to make their Olympic dream a reality.

But our solidarity goes beyond the NOCs and the IOC Refugee Olympic Team. This makes the Olympic Games perhaps the biggest manifestation of inclusion, of solidarity and of peace. At the Olympic Games, we are all equal, everybody respects the same rules, standing together in solidarity.

This universality and inclusiveness that define the Olympic Games require the IOC to be politically neutral. Non-discrimination and political neutrality are therefore at the heart of our approach to human rights as well.

Making the world a better place requires action and change. And change always starts with yourself. This applies also to human rights. For the Olympic Movement, this applies in particular with regards to the Olympic Games.

More specifically, our responsibility is to ensure the Olympic Charter is applied at the Olympic Games. It guarantees equal rights for everyone during the Olympic Games, such as non-discrimination for whatever reason, freedom of the press to report from the Olympic Games, open internet access at all Olympic venues, respect for labour rights standards and many others.

The Olympic Games are our remit. This is our responsibility. This is our commitment. As a non-governmental organisation, we have neither the mandate, nor the capability, to

change laws of sovereign countries. We cannot solve human rights issues which generations of politicians were unable to solve.

But within our remits, we take action. Not only with regards to the Olympic Games, but also with regards to our own operations. We have aligned our strategies on sustainability, gender equality and inclusion with human rights standards. We are a carbon-neutral organisation and we are committed to becoming climate-positive by 2024. We will achieve gender-balance at the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 for the first time in history with almost 49 per cent women participating. Our partnership with the International Paralympic Committee ensures the organisation of the Paralympic Games and supports Paralympic sport around the world. To strengthen this approach, we have created a Human Rights unit within the IOC which is increasing our engagement with human rights expert groups.

In order for our actions on peace and human rights to be successful, we need the respect of politics for our mission. Because if this is not respected, then the Olympic Games would become as divisive as so many other areas of society today. The Olympic Games would lose their unifying power and it would just not possible for us to bring together the world in peaceful competition.

This is why we need politics to always consider the Olympic Games as a matter of cooperation and never as one of confrontation

If sport can play a role in society today, it is precisely in strengthening the areas of cooperation for peace between nations. In this way sport can give all of us, and especially young people everywhere, hope for a better, a more peaceful future.

In this Olympic spirit, I wish you fruitful discussions and a successful Session.