



International
Olympic
Committee

The President

**Smart Cities and Sport Summit
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[Acknowledgements]

The fact that we are able to come together in person for this Summit, while respecting the public health and hygiene measures, feels very special. As we can see here in Europe and throughout the world, the global coronavirus pandemic is still a reality for all of us.

This is why I would like to congratulate the World Union of Olympic Cities, under the great leadership of President Grégoire Junod, the Mayor of the IOC's and my adopted home town of Lausanne, for having overcome the many challenges to make this year's Summit possible in a safe way.

My thanks and gratitude also go to the City of Copenhagen and to our host, Overborgmester Sophie Haestorp Andersen, for your wonderful hospitality. The Olympic community and Copenhagen share so many values. From promoting inclusive and healthy communities, to leading the way in terms of climate action, or a firm commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals – I think I speak for all of us when I say that we truly feel at home in your beautiful city.

It is great to be back in beautiful Copenhagen. After countless meetings held by video during the pandemic, it is truly refreshing to be able to be here with you in person.

As mayors from some of the greatest cities around the world, you were on the frontlines of the pandemic. You witnessed first-hand how the coronavirus crisis has changed our world in fundamental ways. You were the first to experience how, during this pandemic, the solidarity that holds our communities together is being undermined by increasing social, political and economic polarisation. The pandemic has put the spotlight on existing fault lines and inequities, which are likely to deepen even further.

We are all still learning every day. But I hope very much that the first lesson from the pandemic, we have already learned. And that lesson is: we need more solidarity. More solidarity within societies and more solidarity among societies.

Solidarity is at the heart of the Olympic Games, which unite the world in all their diversity. In these difficult times, we need the power of sport and we need the Olympic values more than ever.

This Smart Cities and Sport Summit therefore comes at a perfect moment to highlight this power of sport. The Summit is an opportunity to showcase the special role that cities, and specifically Olympic cities, can play to promote healthy and active living. Cities are also at the forefront when it comes to rebuilding a more human-centred and more inclusive society in the post-pandemic world.

The past months have made it clearer than ever just how important sport and physical activity are for healthy living. We have seen this particularly in times of lockdown, social distancing and uncertainty.

Sadly, just as the pandemic has highlighted the importance of physical activity, we see that the number of people who do not do enough sport is shockingly high. Here in Europe, 46 per cent of Europeans never engage in physical exercise or sports activities. Worldwide, this bleak picture is similar. According to the World Health Organization, one in four adults globally do not engage in sufficient physical activity.

This goes against everything that we have learned during this pandemic – and that is: sport can save lives.

Sport is an important factor in combating obesity and strengthening cardiovascular health, thereby contributing to the fight against the coronavirus.

Promoting a healthy society through sport is an integral part of the IOC's work because it goes to the heart of our mission. The IOC is built on the belief that we can make the world a better place through sport.

This belief is reflected in our Olympic Agenda 2020+5, which has a strong focus on sport as an important enabler to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Simply put: we want people to have better access to sport, to feel like they belong in sport, and that they benefit from the positive health impact of sport. Because, at the end of the day, when individuals lead healthy and active lives through sport, the community as a whole and society at large benefit as well.

This is why our advocacy for healthy living through sport is also a central theme in our collaboration with Olympic cities, as well as with the Olympic Games Organising Committees.

With Olympic Agenda 2020+5, we have made the promotion of sport for all a pillar for the long-term legacy planning of Olympic Games. Our focus is on ensuring that lasting benefits will be delivered to the host communities already prior to, as well as after the Olympic Games.

The Olympic cities of Paris and Los Angeles are demonstrating in a great way how to put this legacy here-and-now approach into action.

Already three years ahead of the Olympic Games, Paris 2024 has launched an ambitious programme, working together with the Ministry of Education to introduce 30 minutes of daily exercise in primary schools throughout France. As of this September, over 1,000 schools have already signed up, demonstrating that you do not have to wait until the Olympic Games are over to benefit from their legacy.

Even seven years before the opening of the Olympic Games Los Angeles 2028, the IOC and the Organising Committee have joined hands with the City of Los Angeles to launch PlayLA – an initiative to provide affordable sports programmes to young Angelenos. PlayLA is made possible through an investment by LA28 and the IOC of USD 160 million.

In Olympic cities around the world, from Barcelona to Seoul, Lillehammer to London and so many more, we see similar long-lasting legacies in action, helping to make the lives of generations healthier.

But the importance of sport goes beyond health.

Sport has a great social significance by being the glue which bonds communities together. Sport has a great economic significance by creating jobs and generating business.

From the United Nations, to the European Union, the G20 Leaders and many more: sport has been widely recognised as an essential factor in fighting the pandemic and as an integral part of the solution for the recovery.

The pandemic has already changed our world fundamentally. Nobody should even dream of going back to the way things were before the crisis. Even once we have finally overcome the health crisis, we will face the far-reaching social, financial, economic and political consequences.

Here again, the cities are on the front lines of this post-pandemic world. Because it is in the large urban centres where we see these consequences impact lives and affect our communities the most.

In this post-pandemic world, and if I may add, in the post-pandemic cities, we will need sport and the Olympic values of excellence, friendship, respect and solidarity to tackle these challenges.

The IOC and the entire Olympic community are ready to make our contribution. Cities are once again a key partner in this, because shaping the post-pandemic world is, in the end, about people and it has to happen at the community level.

By partnering with like-minded institutions, we can be a part of a truly transformative response to the global challenges, guided by our solidarity.

With the adoption of Olympism 365, we now have a strategic framework in place to create such partnerships between cities and the sports community. In this spirit of partnership, we extend our hand to all of you to strengthen sport as an important enabler in areas such as healthy living or taking climate action.

Indeed, the climate crisis shows us in unmistakable terms that healthy people depend on a healthy planet.

This is why our existing partnership with the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group can serve a great example of what we can achieve when we stand together – in solidarity.

In fact, the next four editions of the Olympic Games are being hosted by leading members of the C40 Cities network. Here we have a fantastic opportunity to showcase that the Olympic Games and climate action can go hand-in-hand for a healthy planet and for healthy people.

During the pandemic, we have learned that we can live up to our Olympic motto “faster, higher, stronger”, in sport and in life, only if we are working together in solidarity.

This is why we amended our Olympic motto, which now says: Faster, Higher, Stronger – Together.

Guided by this new motto, let us also send this important message from Copenhagen and our Summit today: we can only go faster, we can only aim higher, we can only become stronger, if we stand together – in solidarity.

In this Olympic spirit, I wish you fruitful discussions, healthy debates and a successful Smart Cities and Sport Summit 2021.