



International  
Olympic  
Committee

The President

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The fundamental idea behind the Olympic Games is to unite the entire world in a peaceful competition. In just 25 days from today, we can celebrate the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games Paris 2024. As it stands now, we are confident to count on the presence of athletes from the territories of all 206 National Olympic Committees and the IOC Refugee Olympic Team on this occasion, to embody this unifying mission and this unifying power of the Olympic Games. In these times of divisions, wars and conflict, this is a very important and powerful signal for unity and for peace. Because these athletes will compete fiercely against each other, while living peacefully together under one roof in the Olympic Village.

Our mission goes hand-in-hand especially with the most fundamental of human rights: peace. At the Olympic Games, all people are equal regardless of their country of origin, gender, sexual orientation, social status, religion, or political belief. This principle of non-discrimination is essential for sport to promote peace and understanding among all people.

The Olympic Games can only become this inspiring symbol of peace through a commitment to inclusion and solidarity. Our mission compels us to always embrace human diversity, and never to exclude others. Non-discrimination is enshrined in the Olympic Charter, our constitution. Going even further, our Charter explicitly mentions the practise of sport as a human right: “Every individual must have access to the practice of sport, without discrimination of any kind in respect of internationally recognised human rights within the remit of the Olympic Movement.”

To highlight our commitment to inclusion and solidarity, we have even amended our historic Olympic motto – Faster, Higher, Stronger – by adding the word “Together”.

This is what brings us all together today: a shared belief in the power of sport to make the world a better place for everyone. In these divisive times, with wars and conflicts on the rise, it has never been more important to build inclusive communities. Sport is the low-cost, high-impact tool for all countries and governments to do this.

This is why the IOC is focused on strengthening this important enabling role of sport and contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals: in the areas of social inclusion, gender equality, promoting tolerance – and in particular, promoting peace. To improve lives. To make communities more inclusive.

The Olympic Games are our principal remit. 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 remit, we take action. We are doing so by walking our talk when it comes to inclusion and solidarity and human rights. We are doing so by fully aligning with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and promoting good governance, ethics and integrity. We are doing so by promoting gender equality: the Olympic Games Paris 2024 will be the very first Olympic Games with full gender parity because the IOC allocated exactly 50 per cent of the quota places to female and 50 per cent to male athletes. We are doing so by supporting Paralympic sport around the world through our partnership with the International Paralympic Committee. Probably the most emblematic symbol of our commitment to inclusion and solidarity is the IOC Refugee Olympic Team, which will participate with a record number of refugee athletes in Paris. You will hear later from Yiech Pur Biel, who was a member of the first IOC Refugee Olympic Team at the Olympic Games Rio 2016. Now he is an IOC Member with full voting rights on the decision making bodies and he may be one of the very few, if not the only refugee, on a decision making body in an international organisation.

Addressing the words of the High Commissioner with regard to the voices of the athletes: these Olympic Games Paris 2024 will once again be the opportunity for all Olympic athletes to democratically elect their representatives. These elected representatives will then at the end of the Olympic Games become IOC Members with full voting rights. The Chair of their Commission, which they will elect themselves, will be a Member of IOC Executive Board – again with full voting rights on all issues being discussed at the IOC.

These are just a few examples of many that illustrate how we promote inclusion and human rights within our remit. Beyond our remit, we know that we can greatly enhance this power of sport by joining hands. And only by joining hands. Therefore, I am extending the hand of the Olympic Movement to all of you: join us in making sport the important enabler to build a better future for all.

To build such a better world through sport, we have to act faster, we have to aim higher, we have to be stronger – and we can only do so together. I therefore invite all of you to truly live this our new amended Olympic motto: Faster, Higher, Stronger – Together.