Sustainability: an integral part of the Olympic Movement

The world faces significant challenges across a wide spectrum of social, environmental and economic spheres. Major issues such as social injustice, economic inequality and climate change are increasingly occupying people around the world. The sporting community is not immune to the impacts of these issues. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) believes that the Olympic Movement has both an opportunity and a duty to contribute actively to global sustainability in line with its vision: “Building a better world through sport”.

The IOC’s sustainability journey

The beginning of the IOC’s sustainability journey came from the 1992 United Nations (UN) Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, at which the IOC was represented. Two years later in 1994, at the Centennial Olympic Congress in Paris, part of the IOC Session was devoted to a debate on sport and environment. The discussion led to calls for the inclusion of a provision in the Olympic Charter underlining the necessity for the Olympic Movement to demonstrate responsible concerns in preserving the environment. This was acted upon and a clause on environment and sustainable development was included in the 1996 version of the Olympic Charter. Variations of this clause have remained in the Charter since then.

Sport as an enabler of sustainable development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, explicitly stresses the role of sport in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This role was further strengthened when in December 2018, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution titled “Sport as an enabler for Sustainable Development”, encouraging Member States and relevant stakeholders to emphasise and advance the use of sport as a vehicle to foster sustainable development, acknowledging the role played by sport and the Olympic Movement.

Mission of the sustainability and legacy commission

Created in 2015, the new IOC Sustainability and Legacy Commission advises the IOC Session, the IOC Executive Board (EB) and the IOC President on sustainability and legacy matters to enable them to make informed, balanced decisions that maximise positive impacts, minimise negative impacts and foster positive change and legacies in the social, economic and environmental spheres.

HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco is the Chair of the Sustainability and Legacy Commission, which is supported by the Corporate Sustainable Development Department.

Olympic Agenda 2020 and Olympic Agenda 2020+5

Sustainability was one of the three pillars of Olympic Agenda 2020, the strategic roadmap of the Olympic Movement from 2015 to 2020, which placed sustainable development as a priority for the future of the Olympic Games and the Olympic Movement with two recommendations:

“Recommendation 4: Include sustainability in all aspects of the Olympic Games
1. The IOC to take a more proactive position and leadership role with regard to sustainability and ensure that it is included in all aspects of the planning and staging of the Olympic Games.

Recommendation 5: Include sustainability within the Olympic Movement’s daily operations
In April 2019, the IOC published the “Olympic Games Guide on Sustainable Sourcing” to help OCOGs meet the IOC’s sustainable sourcing requirements.

The central place of sustainability in the future of the Olympic Movement was further strengthened with the adoption, in March 2021, of Olympic Agenda 2020+5. The following recommendations focus specifically on sustainability:

**Recommendation 2: Foster sustainable Olympic Games**
1. Mainstream sustainability in all aspects of the Olympic Games;
2. Foster the delivery of lasting benefits to the Host communities prior to and after the Olympic Games;
3. Optimise the delivery of the Olympic Games in partnership with Olympic Movement constituents.

**Recommendation 10: Strengthen the role of sport as an important enabler for the UN Sustainable Development Goals**
1. Build on existing relationships with UN agencies to influence global social policy change and resource allocation;
2. Initiate social development through sport partnerships;
3. Enhance cooperation with the IPC on social development programmes.

**Recommendation 13: Continue to lead by example in corporate citizenship**
1. Lead in sustainability;
2. Inspire and assist the Olympic Movement in developing sustainable sports worldwide;
3. Foster gender equality and inclusion;

**IOC sustainability strategy**
In line with Olympic Agenda 2020 recommendations, the IOC has developed a Sustainability Strategy, which was approved by the IOC EB in December 2016 and published in 2017. Based on the responsibility of the IOC as an organization, as the owner of the Olympic Games, and as the leader of the Olympic Movement, it focuses on infrastructure and natural sites, sourcing and resource management, mobility, workforce, and climate.

**IOC as an organisation**
- Thanks to the IOC Official Carbon Partner Dow, the IOC was a carbon neutral organisation between 2017 and 2020 and is aiming to become a climate positive organisation by 2024.
- In January 2021, the IOC committed to reducing its carbon emissions by 30 per cent by 2024, and by 45 per cent by 2030, in line with the Paris Agreement.
- In addition to reducing its carbon emissions, the IOC will compensate for more than 100 per cent of its residual emissions by planting an Olympic Forest in Mali and Senegal as part of the Great Green Wall initiative in Africa.
- Olympic House, IOC’s Lausanne headquarters inaugurated on 23 June 2019, became one of the most sustainable buildings in the world. It was awarded three prestigious sustainable construction awards: LEED v4 Platinum, SNBS Platinum and Minergie-P.

**IOC as owner of the Olympic Games**
- In March 2020, the IOC announced that it will require all Olympic Games and Olympic Winter Games to be “climate positive” from 2030 onwards. This means that the organisers will be required to reduce their carbon emissions in line with the Paris Agreement, compensate more than 100% of their remaining emissions and use their influence to incite effective action against climate change.
- In April 2019, the IOC published the “Olympic Games Guide on Sustainable Sourcing” to help OCOGs meet the IOC’s sustainable sourcing requirements.
- In December 2018, the IOC created the “Carbon Footprint Methodology for the Olympic Games” to help Organising Committees of the Olympic Games (OCOGs) understand, measure and reduce their carbon impact.

**IOC as leader of the Olympic Movement**
- The IOC supported Olympic Champion Hannah Mills with the launch of the Big Plastic Pledge – a
global campaign uniting athletes and fans against plastic pollution.

- In 2019, the IOC teamed up with our official Carbon Partner Dow to reward International Sports Federations (IFs) for tangible climate action.
- In December 2018, working with UN Climate Change, the IOC co-launched the Sports for Climate Action Framework to help the sports community address climate change. More than 250 sports organisations have joined the Framework so far.

**Olympic Games as a catalyst for sustainable development**

The IOC works to ensure that the Olympic Games are a catalyst for achieving the host's sustainable development objectives:

- Sustainability principles are embedded throughout the “lifecycle” of the Olympic Games, from the earliest stages of the Candidature Process through to the handover to legacy bodies;
- Sustainability requirements are integrated into the Host City Contract – Operational Requirements, across key areas such as venues, food and beverage, sourcing and resource management;
- The IOC provides the hosts with regular guidance on sustainability, in the form of guidelines (e.g. The IOC Carbon footprint methodology for the Olympic Games; The Olympic Games Guide on sustainable sourcing); targeted workshops and advice offered by sustainability experts.

**Olympic Games sustainability initiatives**

Within the Olympic Movement, two hosts played pioneering roles in the field of environmental protection. The first, Lillehammer (Norway), set out to make the 1994 Olympic Winter Games a showcase for environmental policies pursued in the country. The second, Sydney (Australia), set new environmental benchmarks in the areas of energy, water conservation, waste minimisation, pollution avoidance and the protection of the natural environment. Since these Olympic Games, there has been a rapid evolution in the environmental element of the Olympic Games bidding and delivery processes. From a focus purely on environmental actions, OCOGs are increasingly taking a broader, more holistic view which encompasses all three spheres of sustainability, i.e. environmental, social and economic. Vancouver 2010 and London 2012 were the first Winter and Summer Olympic Games to formally adopt “triple-bottom” line sustainability management frameworks.

**Vancouver 2010**

The Olympic Games held in Vancouver in 2010 were a leading example of how respect of and commitment to the environment were embraced and integrated into planning. The Olympic Village and the neighbourhood that surrounds it received an LEED Platinum rating and were considered a model for sustainable urban planning. The buildings were warmed by heat generated from raw sewage. The roof of the Richmond Olympic Oval speed-skating rink was constructed with wood from trees that had been infested by pine beetles, meaning that no trees had to be cut. Rainwater collected from the Oval's roof was used to flush toilets. As planned, post-Games, the Olympic venue was converted into a multi-purpose centre for the local community. Games organisers ensured other lasting environmental legacies in Vancouver by creating a non-profit entity to work with community groups, NGOs, governmental agencies and the private sector to develop sustainable projects related to sport and recreation.

**London 2012**

Sustainability was a key component of the London 2012 bid and, in partnership with BioRegional and the WWF, the Organisers established the concept “Towards a One Planet Olympics”. The principles were taken forward in the form of the London 2012 Sustainability Plan, which was structured around five sustainability themes: climate change, waste, biodiversity, inclusion and healthy living. They provided London 2012 with the framework for delivering truly sustainable Games and were integrated into the three key phases of preparation, the Games and legacy.

In a backward glance, former host London has shown that its Pre-Games Sustainability Plan has been true to its written word and delivered a sustainable and lasting legacy one year post-Games and beyond. London 2012’s ambition was to rejuvenate neglected
communities in London, promote healthier and better lifestyles within and outside the UK, change the way people perceive disability, and inspire an entire generation to participate in sport. By building the stage and hosting the Games, London 2012’s delivery partners, i.e. construction, catering, hospitality and events companies, showed the value of incorporating sustainability practices.

**Sochi 2014**

The Sochi 2014 mission was to combine the efforts, expertise and experience of its delivery partners to efficiently integrate sustainable development principles into all aspects of Games preparation and delivery. As a team, Sochi 2014 and its multitude of partners worked to achieve the sustainability performance objectives of:

- Healthy living
- Barrier-free world
- Culture and national values
- Harmony with nature
- Economic prosperity
- Modern technologies

Sochi 2014 has harnessed the stimulus for sustainable development in collaborating with UNEP, the UNDP and independent environmental organisations such as the WWF and Greenpeace. The integration of this international expertise has made the difference in protecting and/or restoring the complicated ecosystems and set in place the creation of a unique ecological legacy which will continue after the Games. Another key feature has been the soft area of cultural and national values with 2013 being the “Year of Museums”, the increase in volunteerism, and the educational component with the opening of the Russian International Olympic University.

In its own right, Sochi 2014 is a project of transformative value for the city, the region and the country.

**Rio 2016**

Social, environmental and economic responsibility criteria have been integrated into Olympic Games Rio 2016 planning and carried out from the onset to the end of the project cycle (i.e. operation to disassembling). Rio’s goal was not only to reach high levels of excellence in Games-time delivery, but also to demonstrate leadership by setting new standards for sustainable management which will positively impact the country and the region.

The Organising Committee’s Sustainability Management Plan (SMP) has, from the bid phase onward, been built on an inclusive foundation of principles, actions and projects related to sustainability:

- Planet: reducing the environmental impact of the projects relating to the 2016 Games, leaving a smaller as possible environmental footprint.
- People: planning and delivery of the 2016 Games in an inclusive manner, making it accessible to everyone.
- Prosperity: contributing to the economic development of the state and city of Rio de Janeiro.

**PyeongChang 2018**

Hailing the vision of “an O2 Plus Winter Games”, the PyeongChang Organising Committee for the 2018 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (POCOG) has advanced in developing its environmental plan. Conserving Grade-1 water resources, revitalising ecosystems, improving biodiversity and recycling waste materials as energy resources are a part of the Olympic Games project environmental infrastructure. These environmental efforts have led to the city being designated a “Low-Carbon Green Growth Model City” by the national government.

Areas in which strides have been made include:

- Venue construction: halve energy consumption levels through the building of energy-efficient venues (e.g. eco-friendly construction materials);
- Biodiversity: land compensation programmes to minimise impact on protected areas;
- Water management: implement waste water reclamation and rainwater management systems;
- Energy: use renewable energy sources (e.g. wind and solar power) to reduce demand;
- Green transport: construct a high-speed railway to enhance use of public transport;
- Education: implement environmental awareness campaigns to increase public consciousness.

**Tokyo 2020**

With the sustainability concept: “Be better, together – For the planet and the people”, Tokyo 2020 is showcasing solutions for a sustainable society.
1. Climate
- Tokyo 2020 will go **beyond carbon neutrality**
  - Tokyo 2020 is implementing solutions to reduce emissions, including by minimising construction, conserving energy, and using energy generated from renewable sources.
  - Tokyo 2020 will compensate more than 100% of its remaining carbon emissions by acquiring carbon certificates from more than 200 companies that put in place carbon reduction measures.
  - Tokyo 2020 carbon offsetting programme considers the full scope of direct and indirect emissions related to the Games, including the construction of venues and transportation of athletes and officials.
- Almost 60% of Tokyo 2020 venues will be **existing venues**, including five used at the Olympic Games Tokyo 1964: Yoyogi National Stadium, Equestrian Park, Nippon Budokan, Enoshima Yacht Harbour and Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium;
- Tokyo 2020 is promoting the use of **low-carbon mobility**. Thanks to Worldwide Olympic Partner Toyota, approximately 500 fuel cell electric vehicles (FCEVs), including hydrogen cars, will be used as part of the Olympic and Paralympic fleet;
- Tokyo is helping create a **hydrogen-based economy**. Hydrogen will be used for the Olympic and Paralympic fleet, cauldrons and the Olympic Torch, and to power some facilities in the Olympic/Paralympic Village. A hydrogen station has been installed near the Olympic and Paralympic Village.

2. Zero Waste/circular economy
- Tokyo 2020 aims to reuse or recycle **99 percent of all procured items**, and reuse or recycle **65 percent of Games-time waste**;
- Tokyo 2020 **Olympic medals** have been produced using materials from electronic devices, such as used mobile phones, donated by the public. After the Games, business owners, local governments and the public will be encouraged to continue donating used electronic devices;
- In a joint initiative between Worldwide Olympic Partner P&G and Tokyo 2020, the **podiums for the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020** medal ceremonies have been made of plastic waste donated by the public and recovered from the oceans;
- The Olympic **torch** was produced using aluminum waste from temporary housing built in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake 2011;
- The **Plaza** of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Village has been built with locally grown timber donated by Japanese authorities. After the Games, the timber will be returned to the communities and re-used, for example, as public benches or as part of public buildings;
- **Beds** in the Olympic and Paralympic village are made of highly durable cardboard materials, which will be recycled into paper after the Games.

3. Gender, diversity and inclusion
- With female athlete participation of almost 49 per cent, the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 will be the **first gender-balanced Olympic Games**;
- Under the leadership of Tokyo 2020 President Hashimoto Seiko, Tokyo 2020 has appointed 12 women to its **executive board**, bringing its female representation to 42%;
- The first permanent LGBTQ+ centre in Tokyo, **Pride House Tokyo** aims to raise awareness of LGBTQ issues through the creation of hospitality spaces, hosting of events, and production of diverse content;
- A **diversity and inclusion platform** will be launched during the Games.

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