



THOMAS BACH

Keynote speaker • International Olympic Committee



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UNITY IN DIVERSITY – RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, RELIABILITY

The debate over the most appropriate structure for the Olympic Movement has been raging throughout the history of International Olympic Committee (IOC). Ever since it was founded, the composition of the IOC, the election of its members and its relations with the International Federations (IFs), National Olympic Committees (NOCs), politics, business and society have been under a microscope. With regard to politics in particular, the debate has always focused on the issue of autonomy, self-determination and preventing the use of sport as a political tool. For decades, many people thought they could simply sweep these issues under the carpet. “Sport has nothing to do with politics” was a popular phrase, which made it even easier for people to abuse sport in their political power games as a scapegoat.

As a staunch opponent and ultimately a victim of the partial boycott of the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow, I directly experienced the political impotence of sport at that time. As an athlete, I wanted to repeat our Olympic victory of 1976. As an elected athletes’ representative, I wanted to enable my team-mates to take part. In numerous discussions, which at times were nothing short of humiliating, I began to realise that sport needed to engage openly with the world of politics if athletes were to be spared the fate of regular boycotts in the future.

Sport must be politically neutral but sport cannot be apolitical. Sports organisations always have to realise and consider the political implications of their activities. In this framework, sport must keep and protect its freedom in its relations with the political sphere and have the freedom to take decisions in self-determination and autonomy. This does not entail creating a legislative vacuum or a parallel world, but simply the possibility for sport to regulate its own, sport-specific affairs under its own responsibility and in accordance with general laws.

The philosopher Immanuel Kant described this self-determination as the basis of all moral action and the “supreme principle of morality”. At the same time, Kant demonstrated that this autonomy is not boundless, as it is also based on respect for the autonomy of other people and society. He, therefore, devised the so-called “categorical imperative” as the ultimate rule of morality: “Act only according to that

maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.”

Now, these principles, which apply to individuals, cannot be transferred directly to organisations. However, the value of self-determination, as well as its limits, is applicable to both. In my view, there are three basic principles that apply to both autonomous individuals and autonomous organisations and govern their behaviour towards others: respect, responsibility and reliability.

This understanding of “autonomy” is indispensable for the existence of sport and is necessary for the dissemination of sporting values. It is also a critical component in developing a partnership between sports and politics that is characterised by mutual respect, by responsibility and by reliability.

The specific nature and values of sport demand and justify such autonomy. Sport is the only social sector that has actually achieved what political philosophy calls “global law” and what moral philosophy calls “global ethos”. The rules of sport, based on the principle of fair play, apply to every athlete all over the world. These rules can be enforced only by an autonomous sporting structure, which also created them. They help to protect fair competition and promote the competitiveness of athletes and federations. This is the fundamental distinction between a sports organisation and a business: “Business does not need competition, but sport depends on it”, said the former German Constitutional Court judge, Professor Udo Steiner.

Another reason for sport to be autonomous is the voluntary nature of its organisation. Anyone who participates in organised competitive sport as an athlete or who is involved, usually voluntarily, in sports administration, does so of their own free will and, to use the same terminology, on the basis of an autonomous decision. In doing so, they also have the right to expect that decisions in sport are taken in self-determination with responsibility, respect and reliability. This is in line with the model of an open, democratic civil society. In other words, autonomy helps to safeguard the values of sport, which the Congress has already discussed in detail, and protects sporting structures from being taken over by conflicting interests that are political, commercial or ideological in nature.

At the same time, however, the autonomy of sport must also be limited. In order to achieve our objectives and to disseminate our values, we need partners in politics, business, culture and society. Nobody is completely independent in our globalised world, which is closely networked through communication and the division of labour. We, therefore, need a clear vision of our non-negotiable principles, responsibilities and freedom, which our partners must respect. In defining our autonomy in this way, we must not allow ourselves to be guided by idealistic fantasies.

Sport should not be seen as an autonomous and self-sufficient island in the sea of society. Rather, we must be inspired by the notion that sport is a part of society, which awakens the desires of many, because of its political significance, and which nevertheless needs partners to achieve its goals. Our definition of the autonomy of sport must therefore be realistic and limited to the key issues.

To this end, I would like to propose three key issues for discussion at this Olympic Congress. All these issues should be governed by the principle of “unity in diversity”.



Firstly, the concept of the “autonomy of sport” should include the right to freely establish organisations, clubs and federations. Unfortunately, this right, which many of you take for granted, is not yet respected throughout the world.

Secondly, these sports organisations must be able to determine their own structures and procedures in accordance with the general laws. In recent years, this right has been the subject of numerous and intense politically motivated attacks.

Thirdly, sports organisations must be allowed to lay down the specific rules of sport and to define and assert its values. Sport, for example, is the only social sector in which doping is prohibited – there is no such ban in ballet, mountaineering, music, business or politics.

If we in sport could agree on this concept and this justification of autonomy, this would represent the first step towards strengthening our position in the face of various, sometimes subtle, even seductive, yet often very direct, brutal attacks on this autonomy.

These attacks come in many different forms. I am sure that subsequent speakers will provide a whole host of examples from the perspective of NOCs, IFs or painful personal experiences. You will hear about governments’ attempts to prevent elections, to appoint presidents of sports organisations themselves and to manipulate voting. Many of you in this room have even suffered personally with your families. You deserve tremendous respect and gratitude for your commitment to the autonomy and values of sport.

Nevertheless, amid this bad news there is also a certain amount of good news. For example, the various United Nations Secretaries-General have frequently emphasised the autonomy of sport. The Swiss Federal Tribunal has recognised the rules of sport, as well as the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). The German Parliament has adopted a resolution on the socio-political importance of sport, expressly drawing attention to the need to respect the autonomy of sport. It is also important to note that governments and parliaments all over the world have abstained from making decisions because they would have interfered with the autonomy of sport.

In order to stem these negative headlines and to create more positive news, the Olympic Movement must develop activities at many different levels. For example, in terms of international politics, relations with respective partners could be stepped up in order to establish the autonomy of sport. The IOC is currently engaged in talks aimed at finding the appropriate wording for a United Nations General Assembly resolution.

Similar steps should be taken by the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC) and by the continental associations of IFs and NOCs vis-à-vis their political partners, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the European Union (EU), the Arab League and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), to name just a few examples.

At the national level, it is mainly the relevant national sports organisations, which must fight for and protect their autonomy. However, they usually need international support and solidarity to do so. The international nature and solidarity of sport both justify and help to protect its autonomy. An important element of this support may also include financial assistance provided through Olympic Solidarity or other

development programmes. On the other hand, these same financial resources tempt people from within and outside sport to use them for non-sporting purposes. In order to prevent such abuse and corruption, the IOC has already introduced accounting and auditing obligations.

In order to protect the autonomy of sport, consideration should be given to granting funds only when autonomy is respected in the country concerned. This could also help national sports organisations from having such resources taken away from them.

As well as these more preventive measures, however, there will always be a need for reactive support in individual cases. On account of the structure of the Olympic Movement, an attack on the autonomy of one of its members always represents an attack on the autonomy of the whole Olympic Movement. There is a need for close cooperation among the IOC, IFs and the relevant continental associations of both NOCs and IFs according to the principle of “unity in diversity”.

The experience of the IOC, ANOC and others shows that the solution depends on unity and determination. If attacks on the autonomy of sport create differences of opinion within sport, these are very quickly exploited by politicians in accordance with the old Roman rule: “divide et impera” (divide and rule). That is why the creation of the “Olympic and sports network”, despite what I consider to be an unfortunate title, is so important.

The IOC and some sports organisations have had excellent experiences with the appointment of people or departments specialised in questions of autonomy. Maybe the Olympic Congress could go further by discussing the appointment of such specialists at all sports organisational levels. For the IOC and each IF, NOC and continental association of NOCs or federations, this would offer better information, greater expertise, earlier problem recognition and more effective problem solving. By doing so, a task force consisting of the relevant specialists would be in existence for each individual case. This task force, under the leadership of the IOC, could act swiftly and effectively with a high level of expertise. It could count upon the assistance of modern electronic tools like the existing IOC/NOC Extranet with its “crises pages”.

If we are demanding respect for the autonomy of the Olympic Movement from the world of politics, we ourselves must also respect the autonomy of the members of the Olympic Movement, without threatening our unity. Our leading principle should always be “unity in diversity”. The Olympic Charter, which was revised in 2004 also with this idea in mind, provides a model for this principle. We are currently in the probably never-ending process of validating the statutes of NOCs. Of course, in doing so and in dealing with any future amendments, we must take into account the diverse cultural, historical and political conditions. The question is therefore: how can we achieve “unity in diversity”? There is no universal answer to this question. It needs to be discussed and answered on a case-by-case basis. In principle, we could conclude that we must always be in absolute agreement where our values are directly concerned, such as in the fight against doping or any kind of manipulation. There may be more variety of opinion where structures and forms of sports organisation, rather than values, are concerned.

I am sure that this Congress, just like the *Virtual Olympic Congress*, will produce a whole host of valuable proposals on the justification, necessity, definition, implementation and monitoring of the autonomy of sport.



However, whatever we are writing, demanding or doing, we must not forget that the respect of all our partners is indispensable for the autonomy of sport. We will not and do not want to receive this respect as a gift. We have earned it and will continue to do so. We earn this respect through responsibility and reliability, by using our autonomy responsibly and acting reliably.

Above all, this means introducing and complying with the rules of ethics and good governance in sport. If we expect our partners to respect our rules, we must also make the rules governing our decision-making processes transparent and respect them. Incidentally, this also applies to our own values and requirements for sport: fair rules, fair play and fair decisions. Sport is completely dependent on its credibility, i.e. on the credibility of sports competitions and on the credibility and reputation of sports organisations.

This credibility and this reputation are threatened by doping, corruption and manipulation at both levels. For sports competitions, we have adopted clear, strict, internationally valid rules, which we resolutely apply. We have created organisations, including some with political partners, such as the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), various national anti-doping agencies and, not least, the Court of Arbitration for Sport. For sports organisations there is a whole range of regulations, codes and commissions within federations, NOCs and the IOC with its Code of Ethics and corresponding Commission. Here, we should go a step further in order to ensure that the ethical principles enshrined in the Olympic Charter are respected by sports organisations at all levels and that they are all committed to the principles of good governance.

At first glance, defining good governance appears fairly simple. In a United Nations Commission paper, governance is defined as the process of making decisions and implementing or not implementing decisions. However, the concept of good governance includes not only the simple description of a process, but in particular the ethical aspects of that process.

What this might mean for sports organisations has already been outlined by a high-ranking working group during an IOC seminar on autonomy. This document, which sets out the basic universal principles of good governance in sport, serves as an excellent model. I would therefore like to explain these principles briefly.

Principle 1: It is necessary to define the vision and mission of the organisation and to develop a strategy for achieving its goals.

Principle 2: Clear, democratic and efficient structures must be created, as well as clear and transparent rules for decision making. This includes rules dealing with members' conflicts of interests.

Principle 3: It is vital to establish a clear definition of internal competences, including a system of checks and balances, and to promote democratic decision-making through good internal communication.

Principle 4: Internal responsibilities should be defined by means of rules and standards, and accounting and auditing processes should comply with general standards. Moreover, financial processes should be transparent.

Principle 5: Clear and transparent rules should be created for the distribution of financial revenues.

Principle 6: Sports organisations should involve active athletes in decision-making and protect and promote their rights at all levels.

Principle 7: Sports organisations should work in partnership with governments.

This is just a selection and summary of the basic elements of a code of good governance for sports organisations. Many other important suggestions were made through the *Virtual Olympic Congress* and these will be discussed further. It will then be up to each individual sports organisation to compile the elements that it considers important, right and relevant for its own situation in order to produce a responsible, reliable set of rules of good governance, worthy of the respect of all partners.

In order to ensure "unity in diversity", the Congress could also ask the IOC to publish relevant guidelines and ideas for the NOCs and IFs and their respective continental associations. These bodies could then adopt the guidelines for themselves and pass them on to their respective national, regional and local members, so that the rules of good governance are respected by all bodies involved in organising sport at all levels.

The IOC itself could consider asking the NOCs, IFs and continental associations of NOCs to submit a report on the status of implementation of good governance every two years, offering help with the creation and application of good governance rules where this is necessary and requested, and organising relevant courses and seminars. Another related idea to be discussed by the IOC, suggested during the *Virtual Olympic Congress*, is to give the IOC Ethics Commission the more accurate title of the IOC Good Governance Commission being responsible for drafting rules and regulations respecting the principle of "unity in diversity" and to implement it in cooperation with the relevant IOC departments.

The application of these good governance rules at all levels of sport will also influence the internal organisation and structure of sports organisations, making them more transparent, more credible and more reputable. This will surely have a positive impact on the stakeholders of sport and sports organisations in spheres such as politics, business, society and media.

This relationship with stakeholders from outside the Olympic Movement should therefore be characterised by the principles of respect for autonomy, responsibility and reliability. The rules of good governance also require that the interests of these stakeholders are taken into account, that their interests are disclosed and discussed, but that decisions are then taken by the sports organisations themselves.

Sport must not make the mistake of confusing autonomy with self-isolation. Sport must not ignore its partners' interests. Sport must not, as it has sometimes in the past, act as if it has nothing to do with politics. Sport must not believe that it is self-sufficient or that it has no economic interests. Sport must know that it is a target of powerful economic and political interests. Sport must realise that, like the whole of society, it also is susceptible to manipulation and corruption. Sport should face these realities openly. Sport should encounter these hostilities through a decision-making process characterised by the rules of good governance.

By doing so, sport will live up to its responsibilities and make reliable decisions that are in the overriding interest of sport and are also respected by others. Sport's relationship with business partners and sponsors will therefore be one from which both sides can benefit, one



in which sport is not simply exploited, but where economic and sporting interests are mutually respected. Many business partners and sponsors, as well as most television companies, have realised that investment in sport only makes sense if the sports organisations' competence to draw up sporting regulations and make decisions is respected. Because this autonomy is the only way of protecting the credibility of sport competitions in the long term.

The other focus of today's Congress theme and of the *Virtual Olympic Congress* is clearly aimed at the relations between members of the Olympic Movement itself. The vast majority of contributions deal with the composition of the IOC, the election of IOC members, issues linked to gender, the influence of the NOCs and IFs, the role of volunteers, the distribution of financial resources, the relationship between the IOC and disability sports organisations and much more.

With regard to the role of athletes, NOCs and IFs, as well as the many related themes, we can look forward to a lively discussion, which I do not intend to pre-empt.

But this discussion should break away from habitual ways of thinking and from traditional organisational structures. It should rather strive for the future. We have to acknowledge that the world of organised sport will, in the future, not be defined only by clubs, federations and NOCs. Globalisation, individualisation and commercialisation have been creating a new type of athlete in many sports, invalidating traditional structures and giving rise to new relationships and dependencies. Links with clubs and federations have become much looser or, as in the case of professional golf, for example, are almost non-existent. Nowadays, many athletes have their own, often international, training groups with individual financial and medical care. Some athletes depend on private investors or sponsors. Others depend on the purely financially motivated owners of their team. Other athletes are self-employed entrepreneurs, dependent on managers, agents and commercial sports event promoters.

One thing all these athletes have in common is that their links with sports organisations only come to light in connection with a small number of events, such as world championships and Olympic Games. Participation in these competitions is often not in the commercial interests of these people in the athletes' entourage. This is why participation in world championships and even Olympic Games is sometimes put in question by mere commercial interests. This has direct consequences on the possibility of enforcing sporting rules on all participants in all events. It also has consequences for the sports organisations and athletes. We should discuss how we can ensure that the ethical rules of good governance will be respected in this specific environment also by managers, team owners, agents and the whole entourage of these athletes. I am pleased that the athletes themselves addressed this issue yesterday.

The second point of discussion concerns the IOC's relationship with the various disability sports organisations. Tremendous progress has been made by and with the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), with which we enjoy excellent cooperation. The same cannot be said concerning relations between the disability sports organisations themselves and their individual relationships with the IOC. This can sometimes result in completely different, if not confused, situations at IF and NOC level. I would be interested to hear whether the Congress would welcome efforts by the IOC to discuss or even coordinate with these organisations their respective goals and plans, and to exchange infor-

mation on organisation, structure, good governance, athletes' training and education, and the fight against manipulation.

The third discussion point concerns the *Virtual Olympic Congress* debate and proposals on the composition of the IOC. The individual and collective interests expressed in the debate are fully legitimate. We are sure to hear plenty of arguments justifying these various interests: the increased importance of the IFs, NOCs, continental associations and so on. We all await this debate with great interest.

I would simply like to suggest that, in our commitment to our respective organisations, we do not forget that the value of the Olympic Movement and its governing body, the IOC, is greater than the sum of the individual interests of its member organisations.

In our respective individual interests, we should also weigh up which type of IOC Session is better able to strike a fair balance between legitimate individual interests thus ensuring the principle of "unity in diversity". Is it an IOC Session that is mainly composed of certain quotas of delegates representing various interest groups, each with a binding mandate from their respective organisation? Or is it an IOC Session mainly composed of independent members without such a mandate; independent members who have authority, knowledge and experience also in politics, business, culture and society?

Whatever the outcome of this discussion, we will reach one conclusion: in an increasingly individualised society, which is on the other hand ever more globalised and networked, sport and sports organisations can only retain their significance if they achieve "unity in diversity" and base their organisation and structures on the principles of respect, responsibility and reliability. Only then will sport be in a position to justify and maintain its autonomy. Only then will sport be able to assert its own values.

Achieving "unity in diversity", justifying and securing the autonomy of sport, defining and implementing good governance and ethics in sport – these are our most important challenges in the future.

By meeting these challenges we ensure:

- that the future of sport is truly global;
- that the future of sport is truly fair;
- that the future of sport demonstrates true solidarity.