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COMMITTEE

Thomas Bach
President

Remarks on the occasion of the adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals
UN Sustainable Development Summit
New York, 26 September 2015

Dear Co-Presidents,

Your Excellency, Secretary General of the United Nations,

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the International Olympic Committee, I would like to congratulate this United Nations Summit on the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals. My thanks go to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, the UN Group of Friends of Sport and many governments on all five continents for allowing the IOC to take part in the comprehensive consultations. The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals mark a historic moment – never before has the international community committed to such a broad and transformative agenda for global development.

As a Permanent Observer to the United Nations, the IOC has not only actively accompanied but wholeheartedly supports the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I would like to thank the Member States for recognizing the contribution of sport to sustainable development and to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.

The new agenda specifically acknowledges “the growing contribution of sport to the realization of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives.”

In other words, sport is a natural partner when it comes to realizing the ambitious agenda that will guide global development over the next 15 years. The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon put it best when he said: “Olympic Principles are United Nations Principles.” The IOC shares the



important goals of peaceful development of humanity. Based on our shared values of tolerance, solidarity and peace, we are committed to contribute to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Let us ever strengthen our partnership to work together for a better world.

Shaping our future is the overarching theme of all the discussions at this UN Summit. For the international community, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development addresses future social and economic progress. For its part, the Olympic Agenda 2020 addresses progress with regards to sustainability, credibility and youth in the context of the Olympic Movement. Therefore, with this Olympic Agenda 2020 the IOC is absolutely in line with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In many ways, sport can help to advance efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in very concrete ways. Its global reach and universality makes sport a low-cost, high-impact tool to support *all* countries – big or small, rich or poor, North or South. The cross-cutting nature of sport allows it to address several of the goals at the same time.

- **Goal 3** calls for the attainment of **healthy lifestyles**: Sport has an essential role in combatting non-communicable diseases which are all too often caused by physical inactivity and poor nutrition. Regular exercise is one of the best ways to prevent illness and disease – thereby sport helps to significantly reduce health-care costs and increase productivity.
- Sport and **education** go hand-in-hand: sport and physical education programmes promote school attendance and help to improve learning performance – a key to success to achieving **Goal 4** on quality education. Research demonstrates that sport improves learning by deepening concentration capabilities.
- Sport is a powerful platform to foster **gender equality** and empower women and girls, as called for in **Goal 5**. One of the key missions of the IOC is, in fact, to encourage and



support the promotion of women in sport at all levels based on the principle of gender equality. Women athletes and Olympians can serve as inspirational role models for young girls around the world. Just last month, the IOC implemented the gender-balanced sports programme for the Youth Olympic Games Buenos Aires 2018. For the first time, there will be absolutely equal numbers of girls and boys competing at the Games.

- Sport is an important tool for **peace-building** and preventing conflict, thereby supporting **Goal 16**. Sport can promote social inclusion, build trust and foster a culture of peace between groups in conflict. Through its 206 National Olympic Committees the Olympic Movement unites all people and builds bridges between all cultures. In Olympic sport, all people are equal, regardless of their ethnicity, gender or faith. This is the spirit of the Olympic Unity in Diversity. A wonderful example of how sport can promote peace and inclusion took place just last month, when the IOC recognized the NOC of South Sudan. With this recognition, we wanted to send a signal of hope to a young nation and its people. The President of this newly recognized NOC of South Sudan told the IOC Session at the ceremony: **“We will arm our young people with sport, and not with guns.”**
- As a powerful and active player in civil society, the sport sector can make a meaningful contribution to **global partnerships for sustainable development**, strengthening **Goal 17**. A central theme of the Olympic Agenda 2020 is that progress needs cooperation. In order for sport to serve humanity, sport must engage with society. Just a year ago in Haiti, we were honoured by the presence of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, as we opened the Sport for Hope Centre together. The Centre is a joint initiative by the IOC and key partners like the United Nations and the Haitian Government. The Centre provides sport, health and educational activities to Haitians of all walks of life. Similarly, the IOC works in partnership with foundations and local sport associations across Africa to support a network of 52 Olympafrica centres in 43 countries. This has already brought sport and educational activities to more than one million young Africans all over the continent.



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Perhaps the most prominent example of the power of our partnership with the United Nations comes from the tradition of the Olympic Truce. The IOC is grateful that the General Assembly has supported this tradition before every edition of the Olympic Games since 1994.

By adopting different resolutions in the last two years, the General Assembly has acknowledged the contribution of the Olympic Games to foster international understanding and peace. We believe that this message of our shared values of tolerance, solidarity and peace is more relevant than ever in today's world.

The International Olympic Committee is built on the belief that sport can contribute to peace and the harmonious development of humankind. Today, as the world sets out on a new era of development, we are truly honoured being a committed partner of the United Nations, to make the world a better place through sport. The United Nations and all its Member States can count on the unwavering support of the IOC to achieve this goal.