International Understanding and Contribution to World Peace

A movement that transcends racial, religious, political and economic differences and promotes an understanding, that can contribute to world peace.

Main Aim: To educate club members towards an understanding that all individuals have a role to play in attaining world peace while at the same time, developing their knowledge and understanding of the role of the International Olympic Committee in International Understanding and its contribution to World Peace

Specific Objectives:

Students will be able to

- Understand and appropriately discuss “International Understanding and Contribution to World Peace”
- Demonstrate (through drama, public speaking, writing, discussion) a greater understanding of the world, its peoples, cultures and religions
- Understand and take action on how the local and global message of peace and harmony can be spread
- Respect and value people who are different from ourselves
- Learn strategies and practice peaceful ways to solve conflicts
- Recognize the interdependence of human beings and communities

When Baron de Coubertin revived the Olympic Games over a century ago, he had more in mind than just playing games. He hoped that the Games would provide an example of how a group of people, working toward a common goal, like becoming the world’s best athletes, would make the world a better place to live. Using the Olympic Games as a platform for international understanding and peace was not an original concept however. The ancient Olympic Games also promoted peace – in the form of an Olympic Truce during competition. Today, the International Olympic Committee stills fights for world wide adherence to the Olympic Truce during the Games – and is committed to promoting peace through sport and beyond. This unit, *International Understanding and Contribution to World Peace* examines the history and links between sport and peace through the Olympic Movement, the challenges to
achieving peace through sport and the modern-day efforts of the Olympic Movement in the area of International Understanding and World Peace.

“Oh Sport. You are Peace! You forge happy bonds together ... Through you the young of the entire world learn to respect one another, and thus the diversity of national traits become a source of generous and peaceful emulation!”

In peaceful societies all people can live safe and healthy lives. Some people in the world take their health and safety for granted. They have never experienced war, hunger, or hatred because of their race, their religion or their gender. However, there are many places in the world where people do not live peaceful lives. They experience discrimination because they are different in some way. In some countries people are treated badly because they have a different religion. In some countries there is discrimination against women and girls. Those people who are poor, or who come from a different cultural tradition, or who have a physical or mental disability, experience special hardships in some countries. Feelings of fear, frustration and anger often bring conflicts among different groups in a community, or between countries. Respecting and protecting the human rights of all people and teaching acceptance and respect for diversity is a great challenge for leaders in all parts of the world. How do we bring peace in societies where there are ancient hatreds, conflicting values, or great economic differences among people? Our task is to develop communities of learners who accept and respect people from other cultures. One way to do this is through sport. The Olympic Movement is intrinsically linked with promoting peace and continues in its efforts to improve the world.

The ancient Olympic Games, which took place during a time of great conflict and war, could be organized thanks to the Ekecheiria or Olympic Truce. By this Truce, the regions around Olympia were declared sacred and impenetrable by any army or armed individual. The Truce, originally legislated that wars and hostilities should cease for one month but was extended to three, and allowed for competitors and spectators alike to travel to Olympia and return to their homes in safety. The peace-bearing proclamation had the power to soften animosity, to neutralize evil, to unite enemies, to create brotherhood both in the sporting arena and off, to stop wars and hostilities and to act as a pacifier to the entire Greek society.

Taking into account the global political reality in which sport and the Olympic Games exist today, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) decided to revive the ancient concept of the Olympic Truce with the view to protecting, as far as possible, the interests of the athletes and sport in general, and to contribute to searching for peaceful and diplomatic solutions to the conflicts around the world. Through this global and symbolic concept, the IOC aims to raise awareness and encourage political leaders to act in favour of peace, mobilize youth for the promotion of the Olympic Ideals, and establish contacts between communities in conflict and offer humanitarian support in countries at war. More generally, the IOC aims to create a window of opportunities for dialogue, reconciliation and the resolution of conflicts. The IOC undertakings for the Olympic Truce extend
beyond the period of the Olympic Games and have led to the implementation of a series of activities in favour of peace through its National Olympic Committees.

“One of its proudest achievements (of the IOC) in recent years is to have campaigned, in accordance with Olympic Principles of the Olympic Charter, against the ignoble policy of apartheid in South Africa, and to have played a key role in its abolition.”

Former IOC President, Juan Antonio Samaranch

The IOC established the International Olympic Truce Foundation (IOTF) in July 2000. Its mandate is to promote the Olympic Ideals to serve peace, friendship and understanding in the world, and in particular, to promote the ancient Greek tradition of the Olympic Truce and to initiate conflict prevention and resolution through sport, culture and the Olympic Ideals, by cooperating with all inter and non-governmental organizations specialized in this field.

Since 1993, the United Nations General Assembly has repeatedly expressed its support for the IOC by unanimously adopting, every two years, one year before each edition of the Olympic Games, a resolution entitled "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic Idea". Through this symbolic resolution, the UN invites its Member States to observe the Olympic Truce individually or collectively, and to seek, in conformity with the goals and principles of the United Nations Charter, the peaceful settling of all international conflicts through peaceful and diplomatic means, and recognizing the importance of the IOC initiatives for human well-being and international understanding.

“Olympic ideals are also United Nations ideals: tolerance equality, fair play and most of all, peace. Together, the Olympics and the United Nations can be a winning team. But the contest will not be won easily. War, intolerance and deprivation continue to stalk the earth. We must fight back. Just as athletes strive for world records so must we strive for world peace.”

Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary General

Sport has the tremendous capacity to reach people everywhere – it is a universal language. It is a school of life. Bringing the world together each Olympiad in the spirit of peace and international understanding is an example for the entire world to see – how people from every corner of the globe come together as one, united in the same pursuit.

“I believe in the moral and peaceful virtues of sport. On the playing fields men are no longer political or social friends or enemies, but only fellow players, playing the same game.”

Pierre de Coubertin

Peace among the world’s nations has not yet been achieved. In reality it is an extremely lofty goal, but it is one the International Olympic Committee has been committed to since its inception. Through agreements with international and national bodies, international recognition of the Olympic Truce, lobbying for justice for peoples that need international support, hosting international conferences, and through the Olympic Games themselves – the Olympic Committee and the Olympic Movement as a whole have made tremendous
strides in promoting international understanding and making a contribution to world peace. Sport has the power to bring the world together and to bridge social, racial and international barriers. Olympic Club facilitators in the Seychelles are as important in this quest for international peace as any other member of the Olympic Movement. Olympic Clubs have the capacity to reach hundreds of children and to spread the messages well beyond their membership list. Teaching youth about tolerance, acceptance and compassion for others on the playing field and off, will not only make a difference in their lives, but a great contribution to the Olympic Movement as a whole.