UN appeals for Olympic Truce during London 2012 Games

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and President of the 66th UN General Assembly, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, called on all UN Member States to observe the traditional Olympic Truce, from the start of the Games of the XXX Olympiad on 27 July until the close of the XIV Paralympic Games on 9 September in London.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon meets IOC President Jacques Rogge in London after participating in the Olympic Torch Relay through the centre of the British capital. See p2.

In his message, the UN Secretary-General recalled that “today, sports and events such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games break down barriers by bringing together people from all over the world and all walks of life. The participants may carry the flags of many nations, but they come together under the shared banner of equality and fair play, understanding and mutual respect.”

The UN General Assembly President, Mr Al-Nasser, noted that “the Olympic Movement aspires to contribute to a peaceful future for all humankind through the educational value of sport. The Games will bring together athletes from all parts of the world in the greatest of international sports events as a means to promote peace, mutual understanding and goodwill among nations and peoples – goals that are also part of the founding values of the United Nations.”

Full text of UN Secretary-General’s message

Full text of UN GA President’s message

Giving is Winning is a perfect example of how Olympic solidarity materialises and how simple actions can make a difference to people’s lives. See p5
The triangular-shaped torch was designed by Edward Barber and Jay Osgerby to represent a series of triads: the three Olympic values – respect, excellence and friendship; the Olympic motto – faster, higher, stronger; the Olympic Games hosted by the UK (1908, 1948 and 2012); and the vision of the 2012 Summer Olympics – sport, education and culture.

A torchbearer public nomination campaign, called “Moment to Shine”, was launched in May 2011, giving people across the UK the chance to be involved in the countdown to the start of the London Games. Torchbearers, aged between 12 and 100 years old, ranged from sporting and show business celebrities to ordinary people judged to have made a special contribution to their communities.

Among them was UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon himself leading a coterie of representatives of UN agencies, including the World Food Programme, the UN refugee agency, the UN Environment Programme and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. The UN Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace, Wilfried Lemke, also participated in the Torch Relay.

"The Torch Relay has been absolutely fantastic. The enthusiasm and support showed by millions of people up and down this country has been overwhelming."

Jeremy Hunt, UK Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport

More than 13 million people are estimated to have lined the streets to cheer on the Olympic Flame on its 8,000 mile (12,800 kilometres) journey around the UK and the Republic of Ireland. During its 70-day journey, the Olympic Torch Relay visited over 1,000 communities and celebrated the achievements of more than 8,000 torchbearers.

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The London 2012 Olympic Games chalked up many firsts in the history of arguably The Greatest Show on Earth, not least because for the first time a UN Secretary General donned on a track-suit and ran his mile in the Torch Relay and later joined some of the world’s most prominent public-spirited personalities to carry the Olympic Flag during the Opening Ceremony.

Earlier on, the Secretary General had shared the podium with British Foreign Secretary William Hague to espouse the Olympic Truce, the need to make it effective, and calling on leaders of the world to give peace a chance.

Both the President of the UN General Assembly, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser and the Secretary General issued public appeals for the observance of the Olympic Truce. This coming on the heels of the UN resolution on the Olympic Games which was co-sponsored by all 193 Member States, a first in the history of the institution itself.

Whether all the energies that were expended in promoting peace in the world in the name of the Olympic Games had any direct effect on any of conflicts that are going on around the world is debatable. One thing is certain, though. The Olympic Games DID play their part in promoting peace and development, sustainability and, oh yes, gender equality.

For the first time in the Games’ history, and that goes back more than 3,000 years, women were represented in every sport. The three countries that had never sent females to the Olympics did so this time. As a result, the ladies were there, competitive and enjoying being part of the greater world stage of the Olympics.

London organized a happy and glorious Games. They raised the bar on sustainability. The organizers lived true to the Games theme – sport, education and culture. All this and more leaves an incredible legacy of development, human endeavor, achievement and a difficult-to-match contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

T. A. Ganda Sithole
Deputy Permanent Representative
Office of the Permanent Observer
for the IOC to the UN
The UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from 20-22 June 2012. Representatives of the IOC joined world leaders, government officials, captains of industry and many others at the event. The meeting took place just a few weeks before the London 2012 Games, a showpiece for sustainability deemed to have been the greenest Games in the history of the Olympics.

Major achievements of London 2012 include the Olympic Park, the largest new urban parkland created in Europe for 150 years, and the construction of the most sustainable Olympic stadium in history. In addition, London 2012 will be the first Olympic Games to measure its carbon footprint over the entire project term, and was the first Games to commit to a zero waste-to-landfill target through the strategic Zero Waste Games Vision.

Rio+20 was also an occasion for the IOC to assess how sport has been a driver for change and sustainable development over the past 20 years. The IOC’s new publication, “Sustainability through Sport: Implementing the Olympic Movement’s Agenda 21”, looks at how sustainability considerations have increasingly become an integral part of the Olympic Movement and the Olympic Games preparations in particular. It also gives an overview of stakeholder initiatives and reflects on partnership models, including with United Nations agencies.

Read the full version of "Sustainability through Sport"

UN Environment Programme helps green Olympic Games

UN Environment Programme Executive Director Achim Steiner hailed London 2012 for raising the bar on sustainability for future Games.

“London’s clean-up of an old industrial site; the restoration of flows and habitat on the River Lea; the greening of supply chains; the low energy linked with the design and construction of the stadium, including utilising old gas pipes for the facility’s Olympic ring; and the use of temporary structures to reduce emissions are among the actions that can assist in inspiring the organisers of the Rio 2016 Games and beyond,” he said.

UNEP has a longstanding collaboration with the IOC in the greening of the Olympic Games which goes back to Athens 2004. UNEP has already made recommendations to the Organising Committee of the Sochi 2014 Winter Games in Russia and has been invited to assist Rio de Janeiro in its preparations for the 2016 Summer Games.

Marrying sport and art

The catalytic role played by sport in improving the quality of life and wellbeing of society was perfectly demonstrated in the 2012 Sport and Art exhibition held in London’s Guildhall Art Gallery as part of the Cultural Olympiad.

Since 2000, every four years, National Olympic Committees (NOCs) are invited to take part in the Sport and Art contest organised by the IOC through its Culture and Olympic Education Commission. The fourth edition of the contest attracted more than 60 artists who shared their vision of “Sport and the Olympic Values of Excellence, Friendship and Respect” through art works and sculptures, demonstrating the creative and artistic strength that sport can inspire.
London 2012 marks an historic step towards gender equality

The decision by Saudi Arabia, Brunei Darussalam and Qatar to include women athletes in their teams for the London 2012 Games was an historic milestone in Olympic history, meaning that every National Olympic Committee (NOC) has now sent women to the Olympic Games.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has worked for many decades to promote women in sport, both on and off the field of play. The goal of gender equality is enshrined in the Olympic Charter, the guiding document for the Olympic Movement, while defining strategies to dismantle gender barriers is the primary goal of the IOC’s Women and Sport Commission.

As recently as the 1996 Atlanta Games, 26 NOCs had never sent a woman athlete to the Olympic Games, but by the time of the 2008 Beijing Games, that number had been reduced to just three. Female participation in the Games has risen from 1.8 per cent at London 1908 to 9.5 per cent at London 1948 and more than 44 per cent at London 2012, the highest ever.

Another milestone in the fight for gender equality in sport at London 2012 was the inclusion of women’s boxing on the Olympic programme, ensuring that women were able to compete in every sport for the first time in the 116-year history of the modern Olympic Games.

“To any woman who wants to participate, I say go for it and don’t let anyone hold you back. We all have the potential to get out there and get moving.”

Sarah Attar, Saudi Arabian athlete at London 2012

Sports kits programme for young refugees

More than 150,000 young people living in camps for refugees and internally displaced people will get access to sport through a two-year programme that will see the distribution of sport kits in 20 countries in Asia, Africa and the Americas.

The International Olympic Committee, the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) and Samsung, one of the IOC’s TOP partners, have teamed up to launch the sporting solidarity programme. Each sport kit contains basic sports and recreational material, such as balls, bibs, caps, shirts, whistles, starters and ground markers, sufficient to set up organised sports activities for about 300 people.

“Thanks to the sport kits donated, many young people living in camps and settlements for refugees will be able to experience the joy of sport.”

Jacques Rogge, IOC President

Getting active on Olympic Day

With London 2012 just a month away, this year’s Olympic Day on 23 June came at just the right moment to spread excitement about the Games, the athletes and the Olympic values. Even more than that, it was a day for everybody to get off the couch, put on their trainers, do sports and have fun.

Hundreds of thousands of people of all ages and abilities took part in educational, cultural and sports activities organised by National Olympic Committees (NOCs) around the globe under the motto “Move, Learn and Discover”, while the International Olympic Committee mobilised its millions of fans on Facebook and Twitter to share their sports activities.

Olympic Day each year is an occasion to promote healthy living and physical activity, one of the pillars of the drive to prevent non-communicable diseases such as cancer and heart disease. World Health Organisation recommendations on physical activity were included in the 2012 Olympic Day toolkit sent to NOCs.
Collecting clothing for distribution by the UNHCR

Donations for refugees

“Giving is Winning is a perfect example of how Olympic solidarity materialises and how simple actions can make a difference to people’s lives.”

Mario Pescante, IOC Permanent Observer at the United Nations

The third edition of the Giving is Winning campaign has enjoyed enormous success, succeeding in collecting 100,000 clothing items by the end of the London 2012 Olympics. Donations will go to refugee camps run by the United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR.

Since the 2004 Athens Games, the IOC has partnered with the UNHCR and the Olympic Games Organising Committees to run the campaign, which recognises the value of sport for human development. The support of donors – international sports federations, National Olympic Committees and athletes – was recognised at a ceremony held at the Olympic Village in London in the presence of the IOC’s Permanent Observer to the United Nations, Mario Pescante, and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres.

Mr Guterres presented a trophy to the National Olympic Committees of Australia, Singapore, Iran and Germany for their contributions, which he said would go to refugees from South Sudan, Ethiopia and Bangladesh.

Several athletes who participated in the London Games know what it is like to be a refugee. They included Lopez Lomong and Guor Marial, both born in what is now South Sudan. Lomong participated as a Team USA athlete and Marial as an Independent Olympic Athlete under the Olympic flag.

“You cannot imagine the joy of the people who get these sports clothes. 100,000 of them will have the chance to dream.”

Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees

Olympic Solidarity athletes on a roll in London

The Olympic Games are about much more than medal tables. They are about overcoming obstacles and personal achievements in the pursuit of Olympic dreams. Of over 1,200 athletes granted Olympic Solidarity scholarships to prepare for London 2012, more than half achieved the necessary qualifying standards to represent their country at the Games.

Scholarships were granted to 1,264 athletes from 171 NOCs in 21 sports to help them in their preparation and qualification for London 2012. More than 600 competed in London, often achieving their best-ever performances and setting national records. One such was 19-year-old Maziah Mahusin, the first woman from Brunei Darussalam to participate at an Olympic Games who also carried the flag for her country at the Opening Ceremony. She went on to set a national record of 59.28 seconds in the 400 metres, an outstanding personal achievement despite being placed 41 out of 45 in the results list.

Zulfiya Chishanlo: Weightlifting gold

Medal winners among scholarship recipients included South African Cameron Van Der Burgh, who set a new world record in the men’s 100 metre breaststroke, and Zulfiya Chishanlo of Kazakhstan, who, aged just 19 years and four days, became the youngest woman to win an Olympic gold medal in weightlifting.

Olympic Solidarity administers and manages National Olympic Committees (NOCs)’ share of the revenue from the sale of broadcasting rights to the Olympic Games. It aims to ensure that athletes with talent, from around the world, have an even chance of succeeding in their Olympic dream and works in particular with the most needy NOCs and their Continental Associations.