



GUNILLA LINDBERG

NOC representative • Swedish Olympic Committee



ORIGINAL TEXT IN ENGLISH

The development of the Olympic Movement over the past 25 years has been extraordinary. Development is always positive and though the Olympic Movement has faced some crises over the years, this has also helped to build a new Olympic Movement that is stronger today than ever before.

For the National Olympic Committees (NOCs), the strong development has led to many changes in their work and most of these changes have, of course, been very positive.

We need look back only 21 years to the Olympic Games in Seoul in 1988. In Seoul, 159 NOCs took part with 8,465 athletes competing in 237 events. The number of media representatives present was 11,300 and 27,000 volunteers were engaged for the Games.

Here we are today at the Olympic Congress in Copenhagen twenty years later and we can look back to the Olympic Games in Beijing with a:

- record number of NOCs – 204
- record number of athletes – 10,708
- record number of female athletes – 4,746
- record number of world records – 40, and 130 Olympic records
- record number of NOCs awarded medals – 89
- record number of Heads of State present at the opening ceremony
- record number of media representatives – 21,600
- record number of television hours – approximately 5,000 hours of live broadcast coverage
- record number of sponsors and money going back to the Olympic Movement and the Organising Committee
- record number of doping tests – 5,000
- record number of volunteers – 70,000

In 1988 most of the 165 NOCs belonging to the Olympic Movement had a very small administration.

The NOCs received very little financial support from the Olympic Movement to send their teams to the Olympic Games. Most of the NOCs received none or very little governmental support to prepare and send their teams to the Olympic Games.

In 1988, we celebrated both the Winter and Summer Games in the same year and we had no computers or mobile telephones to assist us.

For most of the NOCs, the Olympic Games was an event that took place every four years to which we of course paid a lot of attention but the Olympic activities between the Games were almost non-existent.

In 1988, I must admit that most of the NOCs could have been regarded as travel agencies with very little involvement in the preparation and the performance of their athletes.

Programmes for sports development or coach education hardly existed.

Today – after the last decades of development and success – the Olympic Movement is something which exists every day, every minute and every second of the year.

The needs of the NOCs and its work have also changed dramatically, including:

- the need for well-educated and experienced staff with fully equipped NOC offices;
- the need to prepare the teams for all the different sports both for qualifying events and later for participating directly in the Olympic Games. Many NOCs are also deeply involved in other multi-sports events such as continental games, university games, youth games etc. and the number of events are increasing each year;
- the need for talent programmes for young athletes and the education of coaches is a must;
- the need for professional staff for marketing and information is huge;
- the need for close cooperation with governments is essential as governmental support both financially and politically is a must for all stakeholders involved;
- the need for autonomy for the NOCs is covered in the Olympic Charter but the NOCs face more and more problems in this respect. The Olympic Movement has also become a platform for Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and politicians to gain attention and deliver political messages in areas that have no connection to sports competitions.

NOCs today also have other very important work to perform, which is not always connected to sports competitions. Let me just mention some of them:

- the work and cooperation with the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) for the very important fight against doping;
- the work in education and the promotion of Olympic values in society;
- the work promoting women in sports and for education at all levels;
- the work relating to the operation of the Olympic Museums, Olympic Day Run, Olympic meetings both nationally and internationally;
- the work and cooperation with media;
- the work and very close contact with the National Federations (NFs), clubs, trainers and medical experts;
- the work relating to the provision of information to the support teams surrounding the athletes such as parents, partners, friends etc. who are an important part of the Olympic Movement.

All these areas mentioned are directly or indirectly linked to the participation in the Olympic Games.



With my responsibilities as Secretary General of the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC) – combining the 205 NOCs in the world – I have learnt that all NOCs are different not only in size, but also in terms of the different sports systems practised in the different countries.

But I have also learnt that the NOCs also have many things in common.

Let me just mention a few topics that are linked directly to the Olympic Games and that are discussed across all five continents, which could be further developed in today's society and improved for the future.

ATHLETE PARTICIPATION AND UNIVERSALITY

To participate in the Olympic Games is a dream for all athletes in the world. How can we help this dream come true for more athletes, new sports and new events?

If we look back again at the level of participation and universality in the Olympic Games, we can see great progress. Athletes from more and more countries are now winning medals across more and more sports.

Universal participation is no longer a struggle. It is now possible to find athletes from all NOCs in most sports and quota spots are offered not only in athletics and swimming.

Thanks to the attraction of the Olympic Games today, the financial resources, from TV rights and top sponsors granted to the NOCs through Olympic Solidarity, are fantastic.

The programmes through Olympic Solidarity allow more and more athletes in all Olympic sports and countries to be given an opportunity to develop and qualify for the Olympic Games on their own merit.

For the athletes who still depend on universality places, we should open the door to a new system. We should open the door to athletes and NOCs to compete in the sport in which they can have the best possible result and not only in swimming and athletics.

How can we help more athletes to live the Olympic dream without enlarging the overall number – 10,500 – taking part in the Games? Can we find a rotation system that will allow athletes in some sports and events to compete in the first week of the Games, which would give room for other athletes and events to participate in the second week?

The reality is that today there are already many athletes who, for different reasons, leave the Games after their competition has finished.

I propose that the IOC should conduct a study for the forthcoming Games based on this reality.

However, these are not the only issues relating to athlete participation in the Olympic Games.

Other important questions are:

- How can we help athletes who have become citizens of richer countries because of golden contracts, to be better protected after their career is over?

- How can we help the NOCs who are losing their experienced coaches to other countries because of better salaries offered elsewhere?
- The gap between “amateur” sport and professional sport is becoming bigger and bigger. Athletes’ agents are putting high demands on the NOCs for special treatment and we are facing a split tier system among athletes.
- How can we promote gender equality in Olympic sports and Olympic teams when we still have young women who are not given the possibility to develop their skills and become a part of the Olympic Movement?

There are no easy answers to these questions and I look forward to debating them in the break-out sessions.

BIDDING FOR AND HOSTING OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES

The demands placed on cities to host the Olympic Games today is on the edge of being unrealistic. Very few cities in the world can fulfil the requirements for new stadiums, new hotels and new infrastructure.

Applicant Cities are today spending millions of dollars, which makes it impossible for most NOCs and cities to even think about bidding.

Most Host Cities are taking the opportunity of the Games to build new infrastructure and make improvements to existing facilities. But unfortunately when we look at the sport competition venues after the Games, we sometimes find white elephants because of over-scoped and costly venues.

Can we as NOCs and International Federations (IFs) lower our demands to open up the opportunity for more cities to bid and host the Olympic Games?

Will we have only G8 countries bidding for and hosting the Games in the future? How can we open up the possibility of hosting Olympic Games to all continents?

The Olympic Movement promotes universality and we should find a system that makes the Olympic dream real for more NOCs and cities all over the world.

We need to find a way to lower the financial burden on Host Cities without compromising the quality of the level of sport competition.

How can we trust that the promises made by an Applicant City are not going to be broken when the city is selected as the Host City?

Today's economic situation has no doubt created some second thoughts regarding investments that were initially promised, which cannot now be defended from an economic point of view due to the current financial crisis.

Some circumstances cannot be foreseen but how can we make Host Cities more accountable for the promises they make during the bidding phase?

HOSPITALITY HOUSES

The demand for hospitality houses during the Olympic Games for the NOCs and also the IFs is constantly growing.



The costs and administrative requirements for running these houses are huge, although some NOCs are supported financially by tourist or governmental organisations.

Have we evaluated the value of running the hospitality houses and are they beneficial for the athletes?

Could the money have better value if it was spent on finding ways to help athletes' programmes and development in their home countries? Or do these hospitality houses attract national sponsors to such an extent that NOCs or IFs can use it to benefit their athletes?

I propose that the concept of hospitality houses be evaluated further to understand their financial impact as well as the value attributed to the NOCs, IFs and the Olympic Movement as a whole.

OPERATIONAL AND LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES

The logistical challenges for the NOCs are growing from Games to Games. As mentioned earlier, NOCs have many stakeholders that are very important in their countries and the demand for all stakeholders to visit the Olympic Games is constantly increasing.

In addition to making all the logistical preparations for the athletes and officials, we also have to look after the needs of Heads of States, ministers, ambassadors, our sponsors, NFs, personal coaches, non-accredited members of NOCs, families of the athletes etc.

The time spent on finding suitable and affordable accommodation, transportation, accreditation and tickets can take many months and cannot be underestimated.

The NOCs today depend on this wide range of stakeholders and we need to make their Olympic dream a reality, as all of these partners are necessary in our day-to-day work.

The need for accommodation outside the Olympic Village for some athletes and coaches is also growing.

The Games represents the pinnacle of sporting achievement for nearly all the athletes at the Games.

The demand for services in the Olympic Villages is growing, so that athletes may have the best possible environment in order to deliver the best performance of their career at the Games.

Even if most athletes today appreciate and value the Olympic Village, others find it difficult to prepare in this environment, especially if the quality of the accommodation and the proximity to the venues are not completely satisfactory.

The culture in some sports has meant that accommodation outside the Villages must be found and it often falls under the NOCs' responsibility to organise this.

Personally, I feel sorry for all athletes deciding not to stay in the Village as it is the heart of the Olympic Games. The Athletes' Commission should promote staying in the Olympic Village. It is essential for the Olympic Village to be of top quality with good services and food. The athletes must be able to have some privacy. Long travelling times to competition and training venues must be avoided.

Since the Olympic Games in Sydney, the tradition among the NOCs has been to organise pre-training Olympic Camps for their Olympic teams either in the Host Country or in neighbouring countries.

The opportunity to create good team spirit among the athletes adds great value and we will see further development in this area in the future. It is also necessary for the teams to adjust to time differences and be able to have high quality training close to the Games.

This of course puts high financial demands on the NOCs, which reach new levels for each edition of the Games just as the Olympic Games are reaching new altitudes.

To fulfil all these new obligations, the marketing rights for the NOCs are becoming more and more important.

The Olympic values and the Olympic rings are the property of the Olympic Movement and many NOCs need help in understanding the value of these symbols in developing their commercial rights.

The Olympic athletes have to be linked to the NOCs during the Olympic period in order to avoid all confusion with other stakeholders such as personal sponsors, agents, the sporting goods industry etc.

The rights of the NOCs are stipulated in the Olympic Charter but they need to be even more protected by the IOC in order to help the NOCs to fulfil their duties.

The Olympic athletes of the Olympic team are role models for the next generation. The promotion and education of Olympic values such as friendship, respect and fair-play must be high priority for all the NOCs and is an area to be further developed.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Ladies and gentlemen, the Olympic Congress is a forum for discussions and the exchange of views on how to further develop in the future.

It has been a great pleasure for me to share some of my thoughts that are linked to the NOCs and the Olympic Games.

The Olympic Movement is the biggest peace movement in the world and the Olympic Games are the ultimate gathering of our athletes at a sports competition every four years.

Let us always remember that the Olympic values can bring so much to the whole of society and not just to the small percentage of people that can participate in the Olympic Games.

With today's technology, the Olympic dream can come true for everyone around the world.

Let us work together to keep the Olympic values alive. And let us work hard to combat doping, to achieve fair play and a united Olympic Movement also in the future.