



GOOD GOVERNANCE AND ETHICS

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Good governance makes good sense. In his submission on this topic, Richard Peterkin, President of the St Lucia Olympic Committee, puts it this way: "... It stands to reason that good governance is more likely to achieve the aims and objectives of an organisation than bad governance or no governance at all."

In the absence of good governance, anarchy and arbitrariness are sure to reign supreme. No one is well served if it is absent, and certainly not the Olympic Movement. We all owe it to the Olympic Movement to walk the talk and to ensure that good governance, encased in a protective layer of ethical behaviour, is a standing order throughout the Movement.

Good governance is good for you. Thomas Bach, an International Olympic Committee (IOC) Vice-President and Executive Board member, and President of the German Olympic Sports Confederation, had this to say in his submission on this topic:

"Once a sporting organisation is known for its strictly practised democratic structures and the highest possible transparency, it enjoys the trust of all potential partners."

Indeed, at the IOC's Second Seminar on the Autonomy of the Olympic and Sports Movement in February 2008, it was clearly recognised by the delegates attending the Seminar that good governance is essential to ensuring autonomy and non-interference from forces outside the Movement. One of the seven resolutions of the Seminar reads that it is necessary to "emphasise good governance as a fundamental basis to secure the autonomy of Olympic sports organisations and to ensure that this autonomy is respected by our stakeholders."

What do we speak of when we speak of "governance"? Governance is the process we use in decision-making in the entire myriad of organisations that make up the Olympic Movement, coupled with the process we use in implementing the decisions made. The people involved, and

the means through which they are made accountable, are fundamental elements of these processes. Governance without accountability is a sham unworthy of the "good governance" title.

"Ethics" in this context is the sense of right and wrong we bring to these two processes – decision-making and the implementation of decisions once made.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific describes good governance as having eight characteristics. Good governance is:

1. Participatory – everyone is permitted to be heard some way, somehow. Engagement is an active ingredient.
2. Consensus-seeking – decisions are not dictated but are arrived at through thorough discussion and fair debate.
3. Accountability – those who are responsible for decisions made are answerable in some real way to those interested in and affected by them.
4. Transparency – the manner of decision-making is known to those affected by and interested in the outcomes of decisions made, that is, the process is made known and apparent to all, before decisions are made.
5. Responsive – decisions are made in a timely manner, well before the horses are all out of the barn, so to speak. No playing games with time.
6. Effective and efficient – recognise that everyone cannot be directly involved in every decision made which, if it were the case, would surely have any such governance structure collapse under its own weight. Representative democracy has evolved in recognition of this.
7. Equitable and inclusive – at the end of the day, all those affected by or interested in the decision-making process must feel that they were included in the journey, particularly those whose view is in the minority and not the course ultimately decided upon. Hear them out.
8. Adherence to the Rule of Law – in the end, decision-makers cannot and must not countenance any decision that is in breach of the laws and regulations of the land and of the organisation itself. Here it is important that those in positions of authority avoid what I call fair-weather good governance, that is, the temptation to ignore laws and regulations in order to block a decision with which those in the position to do so disagree.

Following on from the last-mentioned point, in recognition of the necessity to apply the principles of good governance in a responsible and impartial manner, that is, respecting a resulting decision even if we, as persons of authority, may disagree with it, it serves us all well to recall the Iron Law of Responsibility which I like to state as follows: "Those who do not use power responsibly will lose it."

The wise prince does himself well to act accordingly, to play on the words of Machiavelli in his centuries-old, world-famous book, "The Prince", which, although it does not intend to, sets forth everything that good governance is not.



If we should find ourselves in positions of power, the power to change things for the better, we must not squander the opportunity to do so by engaging in the exercise of such power irresponsibly. If we should do so, often for short-sighted expediency purposes, we will, sooner rather than later, find ourselves removed from our position of power, and rightly so.

We must keep our eye on the ball, doing what is right, the right way.

In this regard, those in positions of power and authority, the decision-makers, must, at all times, conduct themselves in an ethical manner. It is right to apply the principles of good governance in all circumstances; it is wrong to manipulate the principles of good governance to suit our own circumstances or personal purposes.

In this regard, there is nothing that will bring rot to the garden of good governance any more surely than actual or perceived conflict of interests. It must be avoided.

It is as true today as it was in ancient Rome, in the proverbial words of Julius Caesar attributed to him by the historian Plutarch: "Caesar's wife must be above suspicion." It is not so much whether conflicts of interests arise in situations of governance – they inevitably do arise; it is rather how we handle them that determines whether they lead to corruption of the system of good governance.

A simple rule to apply: always, always err on the side of disclosure, and absolutely stay out of decisions that we have a personal and private interest in. Be ethical, that is all that is required to avoid this tar pit.

Before I conclude, I would like to say a few words about accountability. Accountability is the backstop of good governance. In the absence of accountability, all else is lost in our efforts to bring good governance to what we do. Those in positions of authority and power must be willing to render their accounts for what they have done on a regular and not infrequent basis to those to whom they owe their positions of authority and power.

The process of accountability must itself adhere to the principles of good governance, perhaps, most importantly, those of transparency and participation by those from whom the position of power and authority flows in the first place, and those directly affected by the decisions that are being taken into account.

Ladies and gentlemen, this brief talk has but scratched the surface of the good governance topic. I hope you have found it somewhat helpful in understanding this topic and take something of it back to apply in your circumstances of participation in the Olympic Movement, whatever those circumstances may be.

We all serve ourselves well to bring to bear in all that we do, two concepts drawn from the IOC's Code of Ethics: dignity and integrity. To those I would add respect and responsibility. If we bring these four ethical behaviours to the decisions we make and the decisions we implement, good governance is sure to follow.

May we indeed all follow the direction suggested by the IOC member in Australia, John Coates, in his submission on this topic and in all respects "... actively promote ethical and responsible decision-making" in all of our various engagements within the Olympic Movement.