



MOVING TOWARDS AN ACTIVE SOCIETY

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There is no longer any doubt that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has a duty to apply the Olympic values to all areas of human society, and take measures to achieve this without consideration of differences in race or religion, sex or age. The fact that this Congress has chosen to address the theme we have before us today, under the heading of “Olympism and Youth”, in no way contradicts this. For good reasons the Congress is restricting itself to key areas, but this does not mean that in the daily work of the IOC many other subjects are neglected. Motivating and mobilising young people is and continues to be one of our organisation’s most important tasks.

If we recognise physical activity as a precondition for the comprehensive mobility of our society, and regard it in particular as a necessary basis for a healthy lifestyle, we must recognise that the most important conditions for achieving this are established precisely when we are young. Young people are preparing for a healthy, fulfilled and demanding life, and must be prepared to ensure the means to achieve this at an early age. Physical activity and the practice of sport, plus the proven values of our competition systems, are especially helpful in this regard.

Sport is vital as a catalyst for an all-round education, as a part of that education, as a means of achieving the holistic development of children and as a condition for a healthy lifestyle, and needs all social organisations at the local, national and global level to cooperate to this end. The result of the successful achievement of this social mission is the ability of young athletes to perform important tasks in all areas in later life, and to actively mould society to respond to the increasing demands it faces.

If the Olympic Movement is to be true to the demands it has established and its constituents have defined, it must in particular accept this task. In doing so, it must ensure the cooperation and readiness of all those involved to work with it on this task: parents and educators, sports organisations at all levels, governments and socially responsible companies, as well as other social organisations.

But this task also involves combating resistance and impediments. These include increasing obesity in all age groups, and especially

among children; an unbridled hedonistic attitude; and above all the temptation of a plethora of other attractions in modern life. Modern methods of communication must be used to motivate young people, but also to warn about these dangers and about having just one form of activity to the detriment of physical exercise. This subject is being addressed in depth elsewhere at the Congress.

The IOC’s Rules provide all the fundamental indications as to how these tasks should be defined and performed, but even these Rules need modernising and rewording from time to time in a detailed review process. This, too, is one of the tasks of this Congress. Like its predecessors, the previous Congress, held in Paris in 1994 as the centennial “Congress of Unity”, gave indications regarding our subject. Its approach was understandably cautious, as other aspects connected with the main theme had priority. But the message about “sport for all” as a human right, and physical performance as an educational tool and the foundation for a successful life, was clear. It is generally recognised that, as a result of labour-saving machines, modern means of transport and an increasingly sedentary lifestyle, people today no longer automatically and naturally perform the physical activity that nature intended. For this reason, they need to compensate by engaging in sport and physical activity, especially when they are young. Only rarely is it possible to catch up in later life with what one has missed during one’s youth. Sport in the broadest sense has shown itself to be the best way of making good omissions of this kind.

It has become increasingly clear that sport and physical activity need to be linked to other areas of human development and a successful and satisfying way of life. This means that education and development must be treated holistically, taking into consideration all aspects of the growth and development of young people.

Sport can and should encourage solidarity, teach peaceful co-existence and conflict resolution, reduce aggression, and facilitate fair play. As such, it represents an important factor for combating violence in society. Anyone who has learnt early on from sport to respect his opponent will benefit from this later in other areas of life.

The IOC’s Sport for All Commission, which at its two-yearly congresses studies the effects of lack of exercise, promotes the right of all people to sporting activity and provides opportunities for doing so, and has therefore reached an agreement with the members of the IOC Commission for Culture and Olympic Education to look at bridging aspects and developing a common strategy.

Both Commissions have worked on their suggestions in the run-up to this Congress, and await its results with interest, before jointly developing and presenting their proposals.