The world faces significant challenges across a wide spectrum of economic, social and environmental matters. The Olympic Movement has both an opportunity and a duty to actively contribute to the global sustainability debate in line with its vision of “Building a better world through sport”.

With this in mind, and in response to recommendation 5 of Olympic Agenda 2020 (“Include sustainability within the Olympic Movement’s daily operations”), the IOC conducted the International Federations (IF) Sustainability Project in 2016. This allowed the IOC to obtain an overview of IFs’ sustainability initiatives; identify common topics, good practices and mutual challenges; and share information. One of the Project’s outcomes was a series of case studies, illustrating how IFs are actively contributing towards a more sustainable world.

As part of the IOC’s objective to profile the role of the Olympic Movement in sustainability through the aggregation of information and collective reporting, it was agreed that the identification and sharing of IF sustainability case studies should be continued. These case studies form part of the enhanced support system provided to the Olympic Movement through the IOC Sustainability Strategy.

Each case study is aligned with one or more of the IOC’s five sustainability focus areas: infrastructure & natural sites; sourcing & resource management; mobility; workforce; and climate. The studies are also aligned with one or more of the United Nations’ (UN) framework of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This framework is pivotal for the Olympic Movement since in September 2015, the UN General Assembly confirmed the important role that sport can play in supporting the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs.

The UN’s 17 SDGs provide a common framework for organisations to explain how they plan to contribute to sustainable development and tackle the key global sustainability challenges. The IF case studies attest to the fact that the Olympic Movement contributes to the achievement of many of these.

“Sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development. We recognise the growing contribution of sport to the realisation of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives.”

Paragraph 37, UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
Each IF sustainability project contributes to one or more of the IOC’s sustainability focus areas and one or more of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

FIS WORKED WITH A LOCAL ORGANISING COMMITTEE TO CREATE A MODEL FOR SUSTAINABLE EVENTS

Climate change, natural resource scarcity and other sustainability concerns are threats to winter sports such as skiing. This is why the International Ski Federation (FIS) collaborated with the Lahti 2017 Nordic World Ski Championships Local Organising Committee (LOC) to make sustainability a cornerstone of the event. The slogan “Not for 10 days but for the next 100 years” accompanied all the LOC activities, raising awareness around the importance of making sustainability integral to championships.

FIS guidelines require the National Federation, the host city and the LOC to respect the environment and promote its protection. With the aim of providing a sustainability blueprint for future FIS events, the Lahti LOC collaborated with organisations such as the Sitra Innovation Fund, which provided sustainability awareness workshops for partners and sponsors; EcoCompass, which helped deliver environmental certification; Stora Enso, a renewable materials provider; and Globe Hope, an eco-friendly design company.

THE FIS HAS LONG HAD A STRONG COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY, AND LAHTI 2017 HAS DEVELOPED A TEMPLATE THAT WILL BENEFIT FUTURE EVENTS AND ORGANISERS.”

SARAH LEWIS, FIS SECRETARY GENERAL

OBJECTIVES
FIS and Lahti 2017 worked together and with local companies in order to:
• Develop a permanent operations model for sustainable events.
• Minimise the negative environmental impacts and enhance the positive ecological and cultural impacts of the Championships.
• Set an example in sustainable event organisation.
• Influence stakeholders to act sustainably.
• Inspire athletes to communicate on the importance of “saving winters from climate change”.

Not for ten days but for the next 100 years.
LESSONS LEARNED

• Certifications can demonstrate your credibility and encourage action.
• You can embed sustainability in your event by including requirements for it in your contracts with partners.
• If you do not have sufficient expertise, consider partnering with organisations who can put your ideology into practice.
• Organising educational workshops can increase awareness around sustainability.
• Taking part in public discussions can help your event serve as a catalyst for the diffusion of sustainability information.

SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

Material efficiency
• The LOC and its partners endeavoured to use sustainable materials that could be recycled or reused at future events.
• There was zero waste to landfill.
• 39 per cent of waste was used for energy production.
• Locally produced food was served in compostable containers.
• Decorations and furniture were sourced from eco-friendly companies.

Energy efficiency
• Solar panels were installed at the main stadium.
• The snowmaking system used lake water instead of groundwater.
• The Championships were powered by wind power generated by Lahti Energy.
• The event flame was powered by biogas.
• Wood pellets were used for heating.

Sustainable transport
• Spectators and athletes were encouraged to use public transport and carpools.
• Volunteers and media were provided with free public transport.

Environmental education
• The LOC participated in a debate on climate change with Stora Enso and Protect Our Winters, a non-profit environmental organisation.
• A campaign (called “Tonni-lähti”, which means “One Tonne Less”) challenged fans to reduce their carbon footprint.

EVALUATION

The initiatives implemented before and during the Championships signify FIS’s desire to reduce negative environmental impacts of its events and to mobilise the skiing community to take action on sustainability. The event received the EcoCompass environmental certificate, validating its sustainable credentials, and has inspired FIS sponsors to implement sustainability projects at future FIS events. Future LOCs will benefit from the various event initiatives via a comprehensive transfer-of-knowledge programme.