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Thomas Bach
President

SportAccord Convention 2017

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It is a great pleasure to address you on this occasion of the 2017 SportAccord Convention. Thank you very much President Ricci-Bitti, thank you President Patrick Baumann for this kind invitation. I would like to thank both of you for how you have managed SportAccord Convention and SportAccord in the last two years, making the SportAccord Convention to this event which it is today. Aarhus in this respect is a great choice for this year's event in many respects. It is also a great choice from an Olympic point of view because you know Olympism is about blending sport and culture. So holding the SportAccord Convention in Aarhus, in the European Capital of Culture 2017 is a great symbol for blending sport and culture. This will give a lot of energy to all of us and is a powerful inspiration for the discussions that will take place here.

In choosing your theme "Innovation in Action" you have identified the challenge of today, which you have not only in sport but in society in general. We live in a fast-changing world and the role of sport in society is constantly evolving too. Innovation becomes the key to adapt to this new reality. All international federations and all sports organisations are at the forefront of this rapidly changing landscape and many of you are demonstrating innovation every day. You are leading innovation by modernising your governance structures, integrating new technologies – Francesco Ricci-Bitti mentioned the big data projects – changing event formats and presentation, engaging youth in always new and better ways. These are just a few examples of innovations we can see in sport every day, and I am sure during this SportAccord Convention, new ideas will be born and will be discussed.

This is the first SportAccord Convention since the Olympic Games Rio 2016. The involvement of the international federations in the delivery of these Games was higher and more important than ever before. The success of the Olympic Games Rio 2016 would not have been possible without the great innovation and without the great determination the international federations have shown and I would like to thank them once again, because we could benefit from your experience and we are trusting and relying on this involvement also in the future. As we enter the final preparations for the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang



2018, we are seeing the same determination, the same passion and the same innovation from the winter federations.

Your theme “Innovation in Action” also fits very well with the IOC approach and philosophy of being a disrupter. Just as in technology, disruptors have fundamentally changed the way we do things for the better. In sport, this is the idea behind Olympic Agenda 2020. We need to change the way we do things. 2017 is the half-way point since the adoption of our reforms. It is therefore an excellent time to take stock of what we have achieved with Olympic Agenda 2020 so far. It is even more important to look ahead at what still needs to be done. This is why in September, the IOC will hold its first Olympism in Action Forum, where a major focus will be on exactly this half-time evaluation of Olympic Agenda 2020.

Innovation can take many different forms for the world of sport. One important area where innovation is needed is in reforming the WADA anti-doping system. The IOC Executive Board has just laid out 12 principles for a more robust anti-doping system. This new system must be equally independent from sports organisations and national interests. The overall focus of the changes we are calling for is very much on strengthening the role of WADA and we look forward to discussing the next steps with the government representatives in WADA.

This is necessary because even the perception of a conflict of interest is damaging to the credibility of the anti-doping system. As we have seen from recent cases involving NADOs, it is especially important to keep the anti-doping system independent from national interests.

In a world where the integrity and credibility of sport is scrutinized by a sceptical public like never before, perception sometimes and even more often becomes reality. This is why it is so important that we avoid even the perception of a conflict of interest. This would be addressed with this new system that is equally independent from sports organisations and national interests. For an international federation, this can only be advantageous. Any federation would be protected from the high risk of liability that you are currently exposed to and that so many of us already had to experience.

This is also one of the reasons why we are calling for the creation of an Independent Testing Authority. Working together with each international federation, this Independent Testing Authority will develop an International Test Distribution Plan customised for every sport and



every discipline and devised by the international federation. This test plan would bring transparency and clear standards for each athlete in every discipline of a sport. Such an approach would ensure an international level playing field. This is what it is all about. An international level playing field can only be created by international organisations and in this case by international federations. It would continue to draw on the expertise of the federations while protecting you from the risks and liability of the current system. NADOs would continue their national testing activities and programmes. It is my great hope that also in this respect, we can join forces. The international federations have an important role to play in these reforms and stand to benefit from such an Independent Testing Authority.

The same issues around perception also hold true for national anti-doping entities, where we are seeing disputes over sanctioning of individual athletes as well as over the duration of suspension. With an independent international sanctioning system, there would be no such perception and disputes. We have a very good experience with the independent sanctioning power of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), which was in place during the Olympic Games Rio 2016. There was not a single appeal against any of the decisions taken there. This is one of the reasons why we strongly believe that this is the way forward with regards to sanctioning – both with regards to athletes and with regards to organisations.

It is my hope that guided by the 12 principles that were laid out, we can continue our dialogue and close cooperation with our partners in WADA and the governments, to bring the necessary innovations – or should I better say disruption? – to the anti-doping system.

Another area where innovation will have a fundamental impact on the future of sport is with regards to the candidature process to host the Olympic Games. Olympic Agenda 2020 has already fundamentally transformed our philosophy of the organisation of the Olympic Games. Now cities who want to host Olympic Games are shaping their bids with a clear focus on sustainability, feasibility and legacy. Under Olympic Agenda 2020, we are asking the Candidate Cities to tell us their vision of how the Olympic Games can best serve the long-term development plans of the city and its citizens.

The candidature process for the Olympic Games 2024 is the first that is fully guided by Olympic Agenda 2020. We are seeing promising results already now. As an article in a prominent sports business magazine has pointed out recently, “the 2024 contenders are



taking sustainability more seriously than any previous Olympic bidding process.” In fact, we know that without Olympic Agenda 2020 we would have had no candidate city at all for 2024. This shows just how important it is to innovate at the right time.

We also recognize that we have to go even further to adapt the candidature process to the current political reality. Since the adoption of Olympic Agenda 2020, the world has changed again, especially with regards to political decision making. We have seen candidatures that enjoyed broad support by the political, business and sport establishments and these candidatures then finally were voted down or attacked by the public precisely because they are seen as a project of the establishment. The public nowadays has great mistrust in any establishment and we belong in their eyes to the establishment; even more so when the different establishments are working together.

Sir Hugh Robertson, the chairman of the British Olympic Association, explained this trend very well when he said: “All political cycles rise and fall and we are in a period where establishments are on the back foot.” He also noted that: “Voting against the Olympics as a tool of the establishment is a profoundly illogical thing to do.”

Whether illogical or not, this is the reality that we are confronted with today. This makes it more and more difficult to build a winning candidature. It makes it even harder, maybe in some cases even impossible, that a losing candidature will go on and try again for a second or third time, as has been common practise in the past. This dynamic then has an exponential effect, leading to fewer and fewer candidates.

Therefore, we need to keep innovating and adapt our candidature process to this reality. Right now, the process produces too many losers on all sides. But the purpose of the candidature process is not to produce as many losers as possible. The purpose of the candidature process is and has to be to produce the best possible host city for the Olympic athletes. Therefore, we need to adapt the process, making it less costly, more flexible, more effective, more streamlined.

Also in this regard, all of us gathered here today, the sports organisations and federations, bring valuable experience and insights, which are always very much welcomed. I look forward to hearing your perspectives on these and all the many other important issues.



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This is why events like the SportAccord Convention are so important and so helpful. We know that we can make progress only together. We can shape the better future of sport only in cooperation. I would like to invite you to take part in shaping this future. Because the future of sport is bright. It is brighter the more we cooperate together, the more we are united, the more we are fighting for our common goals and our common values. And this, I hope, will be one of the major topics of this SportAccord. This is the offer from the IOC to all international federations and to all sports organisations. Be welcome, feel welcome, enjoy this effort to shape a better world through sport. Thank you for having this opportunity to be with you here these days as SportAccord Convention and enjoy the congress.