



INTERNATIONAL  
OLYMPIC  
COMMITTEE

Thomas Bach  
President

**Opening remarks to the 135<sup>th</sup> IOC Session  
Lausanne, 10 January 2020**

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I assume that you have not only read but also studied all details of my written report as well as my recent New Year's message. This is why I would just like to highlight some of the developments that have taken place since our last Session and put them into the overall context we are living in.

We are starting this Olympic Year 2020 on a solid foundation of unprecedented strength and stability. This did not just happen by chance. We are in this strong position because we have laid the groundwork for this over the past years with the implementation of Olympic Agenda 2020.

In our troubled times, with uncertainty and tensions rising everywhere, our situation is by no means a foregone conclusion. We are where we are today thanks to the collective and concerted effort by all of us to take on the challenges of our times. In our fragile world, the stability that we are enjoying is perhaps the strongest currency that you can have. Not many other organisations can claim to have this strong currency in our volatile times.

Especially in this Olympic Year, we see just how important our reforms have been. Everything we do ultimately depends on the success of the Olympic Games. In this respect, we can see a concrete example of the positive impact of Olympic Agenda 2020 already today.

The Winter Youth Olympic Games Lausanne 2020 are of course a special moment for all of us here in the Olympic Capital. In line with Olympic Agenda 2020, and as we have heard from the Mayor, the State Councillor and the President of the Organising Committee this is the first winter edition of the YOG with complete gender equality. In all other respects, the organisation of these YOG is following Olympic Agenda 2020 as well. These YOG will be more inclusive than ever before. Tens of thousands of local schoolchildren will share this Olympic experience with the athletes. The entire population of Lausanne will share the Olympic spirit with the many sporting and cultural activities taking place across the Olympic



Capital. There are sports and new disciplines to make the programme more appealing to a young audience.

Also in line with Olympic Agenda 2020, sustainability is at the heart of the organisation of these Winter Youth Olympic Games. Great attention has been given to make sure that existing venues are being used wherever possible, even across national borders. New constructions like the impressive Vortex building were built with a clear legacy plan and will serve as student housing after the Games. Thanks to other organisational innovations like the two-wave arrival of athletes, Lausanne 2020 can accommodate 1,800 athletes from 79 NOCs for these Winter Youth Olympic Games. That is a 40 per cent increase from the last edition, giving more young athletes than ever the chance to experience this unique Olympic event without putting additional burden on the Organising Committee.

Beyond the Youth Olympic Games, we have also revolutionised the candidature procedure of selecting Olympic hosts with our reforms. This happened just six months ago, when you approved these reforms. The establishment of the Future Host Commissions last year was an important step in the evolution of this revolution. The Future Host Commission for the winter editions of the Olympic Games hit the ground running under the chairmanship of our colleague Octavian Morariu. Thanks to the excellent work of the Commission, we are in a position at this IOC Session, only six months after approving this reform, to present a proposal for a host for the 4<sup>th</sup> Winter Youth Olympic Games 2024. This clearly demonstrates that our new approach is working and that it is successful.

At the beginning of this Olympic Year, let me highlight some important aspects of the context that we will be facing in the coming months leading up to the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020.

Since the last time we met, there have been some important developments in the fight against doping. This includes the ongoing CAS case concerning RUSADA as well as the allegations against the International Weightlifting Federation.

The IOC also made a significant announcement at the 5th World Conference on Doping in Sport in Katowice, Poland, this past November. The four-point action plan worth 10 million US dollars announced on this occasion will strengthen the protection of the clean athletes.



We will be able to discuss all these points in more detail when IOC Vice-President, Professor Ugur Erdener, gives his presentation, later today.

From the beginning of the year WADA has a new leadership team. The new WADA President Witold Banka is with us today.

President Banka, it is a great pleasure to welcome you to this IOC Session so early during your presidency. The IOC and the Olympic Movement are looking forward to joining hands with you, as you bring a new energy and determination to WADA and to the fight against doping.

This also gives us the opportunity to thank Sir Craig Reddie, the now former President of WADA, who completed his term at the end of last year and can unfortunately not be with us today.

He had to lead WADA through some of the most difficult periods of this organisation. Nobody envied him for this. But with all his diplomatic skills, his good sense of humour and his openness, he managed to navigate the rough waters and finally steadied the WADA ship. On behalf of the entire Olympic Movement I say: thank you very much, Sir Craig.

We can start this Olympic Year with great confidence and optimism. It is an important reminder of the relevance of our mission and the values we stand for. Today, the Olympic Games are the only event that brings the entire world together in peaceful competition.

In our fragile world, with mistrust, selfishness and isolationism on the rise, the strong position we find ourselves in should give all of us a sense of purpose. Our mission requires that we stand against this zeitgeist of division, of nationalism and of discrimination. In fact, it is in these troubled times that we need to stand up for the values that define us.

On the one hand, with our values of peace, unity and solidarity, we stand in sharp contrast to the zeitgeist of our times. On the other hand, our stability puts us in a position of strength to protect and even reinforce the values we stand for.



In our world that is facing so many global challenges, the relevance of our mission, the mission of the Olympic Games, to bring together the world in peace and friendship, is maybe more important than ever before.

This is why the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 will not only be the greatest sporting event in the world. When the athletes of the 206 National Olympic Committees and the IOC Refugee Team come together, it will also be a celebration of the unity in diversity of all humankind. It is this symbol, this unifying power of the Olympic Games that we need to protect with everything we do every day.

This Olympic Year also reminds us that we can only send this strong message of unity in diversity to the world with solidarity. Universality at the Olympic Games is only possible if everyone can participate under fair conditions.

This is why our Olympic Solidarity model is so important. This model benefits all athletes from all NOCs in the world. Not just a few countries. Not just a few sports. It benefits all the athletes from all NOCs and from all Olympic sports, thereby ensuring true universality at the Olympic Games. As the athletes of the world set their sights on Tokyo and beyond, they need to know that they can rely on our support, that they can rely on solidarity. For this reason, let me reiterate our unwavering commitment to the solidarity model.

We want all athletes to continue to benefit from the commercial success of the Olympic Games. At the Olympic Games, the athletes are participating as members of their Olympic team. It is this Olympic team that receives the funds from us. This is the same situation like for instance in football. In the UEFA Champions League, it is the clubs that are receiving the funds. The same happens at the FIFA World Cup, where the national teams receive the funds. They then in turn, like our NOCs, are supporting the athletes, the players, and the development of their sport.

In the same way, we distribute 90 per cent of all our revenues for the benefit of the athletes and the development of sport around the globe. The money goes to the organisers of Olympic Games who are giving the athletes the stage to shine, to the Olympic teams – the NOCs, and to the IFs. It goes towards the fight against doping. It is used for medical prevention programs and for direct scholarships for athletes. Currently, there are more than



1,600 Olympic Scholarship holders for the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020. We also cover the travel and accommodation costs of all teams at Olympic Games. These are just a few examples of many more of how the solidarity model works.

In this respect, it was encouraging to see that at last year's International Athletes' Forum, the athletes' representatives recognised the central importance of this solidarity model for all of them. This Forum was the biggest-ever gathering of legitimate athlete representatives and in the final recommendations, they called for continued support to strengthen this model. We will follow this recommendation of the athletes of the world. It is precisely because the solidarity model is different from purely commercial organisations that all of us and in particular the IFs and NOCs need to communicate clearly and transparently on the support that the athletes receive both directly and indirectly.

However, the solidarity model continues to be challenged by commercial interest. If we were to give in to those interests, then the Olympic Games would devalue to a purely profit-driven business model.

There would not be 33 Olympic sports in Tokyo 2020 and seven in Beijing 2022, but only a much more limited number. We would not have athletes from all 206 National Olympic Committees participating in the Olympic Games, but only a much more limited number. Our global appeal, our universality, indeed our relevance as a symbol of unity for the world, would fade away.

Here we need to stand firmly and declare that our solidarity model is not for sale. We are a values-based organisation. We are a solidarity-driven organisation. For us, money is not an end in itself. Money is just a means to achieve our mission.

Another important element to our mission is political neutrality. We can only accomplish our mission to unite the world if the Olympic Games stand above and beyond any and all political differences. We can only achieve this global solidarity and true universality if the IOC and the Olympic Games are politically neutral.

With the unfortunately growing misuse of sport for political purposes that we are seeing today, it is more important than ever to stand firmly for our values and declare that we are



neutral in every respect. At the Olympic Games, all people are equal, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, cultural background, or political belief. Therefore, we stand against discrimination of any kind.

Our political neutrality is undermined whenever organisations or individuals attempt to use the Olympic Games as a stage for their own agendas – as legitimate as they might be. The Olympic Games are first and foremost a sports celebration of our shared humanity. The Olympic Games are always a global platform for the athletes and their sporting performances. They are not, and must never be, a platform to advance political or any other potentially divisive ends. If this political neutrality is not respected, then the Olympic Games will divide, and not unite, the world.

This is especially important to bear in mind in an Olympic Year, when the eyes of the world will be on the athletes and on the Olympic Games. In this respect, I very much welcome the Rule 50 guidelines which were developed by the IOC Athletes' Commission in consultation with athletes and the worldwide network of athletes' commissions.

I was able to address these issues of solidarity and political neutrality at the recent G20 Summit in Osaka and at the UN General Assembly in New York. On both occasions, our messages of solidarity and political neutrality were well received by the world leaders and the representatives of the UN Member States. They showed their support for our political neutrality by unanimously adopting the Olympic Truce Resolution for the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020. This is why I would like to thank all UN Member States for their support, in particular the 186 co-sponsor countries. This shows the strong support and relevance that we and our values are enjoying in the fragile world.

We welcome and appreciate this support because we know that we can only achieve our mission if the political leaders respect our political neutrality and the unifying mission of the Olympic Games. At the same time, we also know that we cannot take such support for granted. We have to fight for it.

With the support we are also enjoying from our TOP Partners and Rights-Holding Broadcasters, the Organising Committees of future Olympic Games and Youth Olympic Games, and all our stakeholders, with all this support we can look ahead to this Olympic



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Year with confidence and optimism. But let us not take anything for granted. In our fragile world, we have to continuously strive to uphold our mission. We have to continue to build bridges and build these bridges on our strength. We have to stand together even stronger for our values. Yes, we live in uncertain times. But let us take courage once more from our founder Pierre de Coubertin who said: “Charge boldly through the clouds and do not be afraid. The future belongs to you.”

So let us shape our future together.