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Thomas Bach
President

**Remarks on the occasion of the adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals
70th Session of the UN General Assembly
New York, 26 September 2015
- Check against delivery -**

[Acknowledges dignitaries]

On behalf of the International Olympic Committee, I would like to congratulate the 70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals. My thanks go to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, the UN Group of Friends of Sport and many governments on all five continents for allowing the IOC to take part in the comprehensive consultations. The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals mark a historic moment – never before has the international community committed to such a broad and transformative agenda for global development.

As a Permanent Observer to the United Nations, the IOC has not only actively accompanied but wholeheartedly supports the post-2015 development agenda. I would like to thank the Member States for recognizing the contribution of sport to sustainable development and to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.

The new agenda specifically acknowledges (in paragraph 37) “the growing contribution of sport to the realization 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.”

In other words, sport is natural partner when it comes to realizing the ambitious agenda that will guide global development over the next 15 years. The United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon put it best when he said: “Olympic Principles are United Nations Principles.” The IOC shares the important goals of peaceful development of humanity – and based on our shared values of tolerance, solidarity and peace, we are committed to continued cooperation with the United Nations



and its Member States to make the Sustainable Development Goals a reality. Let us ever strengthen our partnership to work together for a better world.

Shaping our future is the overarching theme of all the discussions in this UN Summit. For the international community, the Sustainable Development Goals will shape the agenda of future social and economic progress. The Olympic Agenda 2020 – with its focus on sustainability, youth and credibility – is the strategic roadmap shaping the future of the Olympic Games, the Olympic Values and the IOC. With this Olympic Agenda 2020 the IOC is absolutely in line with the objectives of the UN post-2015 development agenda. In many ways, this alignment offers a great opportunity to use the power of sport as a positive force to shape our common future. Sport brings our shared values and goals into focus and our shared ideals provide a natural foundation for our strategic partnership.

Sport can help to advance country efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in very concrete ways. Its global reach and universality makes sport a low-cost, high-impact tool to support *all* countries – big or small, rich or poor – working towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The cross-cutting nature of sport allows it to address several of the goals at once.

- **Goal 3** calls for the attainment of **healthy lifestyles**: Sport has an essential role in combatting non-communicable diseases which are all too often linked with physical inactivity and poor nutrition. Scientific evidence clearly shows that sport is essential for good health. Regular exercise is one of the best ways to prevent illness and disease – thereby sport helps to reduce health-care costs and increase productivity in countries.
- Sport and **education** go hand-in-hand: sport and physical education programmes promote school attendance and help to improve learning performance – a key to success to achieving **Goal 4** on quality education. Research demonstrates that sport improves learning by providing better concentration capabilities and enabling students to learn longer with an even higher degree of concentration.
- Sport is a powerful platform to foster **gender equality** and empower women and girls, as called for in **Goal 5**. One of the key missions of the IOC is, in fact, to encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels based on the principle of gender



equality. Women athletes and Olympians can serve as inspirational role models for young girls around the world. Just last month we took the historic decision to approve the gender-balanced sport programme for the Youth Olympic Games Buenos Aires 2018. For the first time there will be equal numbers of women and men athletes competing at the Games.

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- Sport is also an important tool for **peace-building** and preventing conflict, thereby supporting **Goal 16**. Sport can promote social inclusion, build trust and foster a culture of peace between groups in conflict. Through its 206 National Olympic Committees the Olympic Movement unites people and builds bridges.

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A wonderful example of how sport can promote peace and inclusion took place just last month, when the IOC recognized the NOC of South Sudan. With this recognition, we wanted to send a signal of hope to a young nation; a signal of hope, because sport always builds bridges between people and cultures. In sport, all people are equal, all ethnic groups, all cultures and all religions are equal.

- The President of the newly recognized NOC of South Sudan told the IOC Session at the ceremony: **"We will arm our young people with sport, and not with guns."**
- As a powerful and active player in civil society, the sport sector can make a meaningful contribution to **global partnerships for sustainable development**, strengthening **Goal 17**. A central theme of the Olympic Agenda 2020 is that progress needs cooperation. In order for sport to serve humanity, sport must engage with society. Just a year ago in Haiti, we were honoured by the presence of the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, as we opened the Sport for Hope Centre in Port-au-Prince together. The Centre is a joint initiative by the IOC and key partners like the United Nations and the Haitian Government. The Centre provides sport, health and educational activities to Haitians of all walks of life. Similarly, the IOC works in partnership with foundations and local sport associations across Africa to support a network of 52 Olympafrica centres, bringing sport and educational activities to more than one million young people all over the continent.

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Perhaps the most prominent example of the power of our partnership comes from the tradition of the Olympic Truce. The IOC is grateful that the General Assembly has supported this tradition before every edition of the Olympic Games since 1994. By adopting resolutions to promote the observation of the Olympic Truce, this esteemed body has rightfully acknowledged the contribution the Olympic Games can make to promote international understanding and peace. We believe that the message of our shared values of tolerance, solidarity and peace is more relevant than ever in today's world. Looking ahead to the Olympic Games Rio de Janeiro 2016, it is our sincere hope that the General Assembly will once more support the tradition of the Olympic Truce.

The International Olympic Committee is built on the belief that sport can contribute to peace and the harmonious development of humankind. Today, as the world sets out on a new era of development, we are truly honoured being a committed partner for development with the United Nations we want to make the world a better place through sport. The United Nations can count on the unwavering support of the IOC to achieve this goal.
