

Check Against Delivery

Mega-Sporting Events and Human Rights

OECD Responsible Business Forum

Paris, 18 June 2015

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On 23rd June 1894, the International Olympic Committee was born here in Paris at a Congress organised by Baron Pierre de Coubertin. In one of his most eloquent remarks, he described the significance of sports in life, by emphasising the importance of the means, and not the ends. As he said: “The important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win, but to take part; the important thing in life is not triumph, but the struggle; the essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well. To spread these principles is to build up a strong and more valiant and, above all, more scrupulous and more generous humanity.” The Olympic Charter affirmed this view, placing sport at “the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.”

Fifty-four years later in 1948, in the wake of two devastating world wars, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the *Palais de Chaillot* only a short walk from where we are here today. The Declaration’s Article One states clearly a similar aspiration that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

Today, here in Paris, sport and human rights are being considered once again, not least, as there are sporting events underway as we speak, from early summer tennis tournaments to the European Games in Baku, Azerbaijan. The latter has raised serious concerns about freedom of expression and the protection of human rights defenders.

In recent years, the question of human rights responsibilities in the context of organising mega-sporting events – both on and off the field of play – has become more urgent. These

events can of course make substantial contributions to the advancement of human rights, for example through job creation, increased diversity and inclusivity, and improved health and safety standards across whole industries. Yet the fact that we are asking the question is perhaps testament more to humanity's weakness and not its strength. Mega-sporting events appeal to the noblest aspirations, the pursuit of excellence and creativity of athletes. But they also play to the ambitions of governments and leaders and the image they wish to project internationally. As mass televised spectacles watched by hundreds of millions of people around the world, major sporting events today have also become arenas for corporate promotion and advertising – with sponsorship rights zealously protected between rival companies and brands.

The human rights abuses that we see associated with such events are often a result of this mismatch between ambition and reality, and between expectations and accountability. Mega-sporting events have become a lightning rod for all those wishing to raise human rights issues, even if these issues are not directly connected with the Games themselves. And that is an inevitable consequence of sport's reach in our global society, amplified by modern communications technology, which gives campaigning organisations a ready platform to showcase their causes. Over the years, the concerns have included:

Planning & land development

- Forced evictions - 170,000 Brazilians may lose their homes as result of preparations for Brazil 2014 and Rio 2016.
- Residents reportedly removed from an informal settlement in South Africa in 2010.
- Relocation challenges happen in all countries – in London 2012 there were complaints about community re-housing and business relocations.

Venue construction and infrastructure development

- 50 deaths reported on construction projects for the New Delhi 2010 Commonwealth Games, and more fatalities alleged in developing the transport infrastructure needed to support the event.
- Over 10 people said to have died in accidents in Brazil 2014 to prepare various FIFA World Cup venues.
- Migrant workers are often especially vulnerable – with reports of labour exploitation, passports and wages being withheld, and fatal accidents in Beijing 2008, Sochi 2014, Qatar 2022 and elsewhere.

Procurement of good and services

- Media and NGOs have highlighted cases of child labour, low wages, and poor working conditions in factories in the manufacture of merchandise and sporting goods for the

South Africa 2010 World Cup and the Beijing 2008 and London 2012 Olympics.

During the events themselves

- Harassment of homeless people reported in Atlanta 1996 and South Africa 2010.
- Street vendor complaints of being denied the right to trade during the 2013 Confederations Cup in Brazil (a typical practice at Brazilian football stadiums).
- Some migrant workers employed by temporary agencies working in hotels during London 2012 claimed their wages were cut without warning.
- Clampdowns reported on the right to protest in Vancouver 2010, London 2012, Brazil 2014 and Baku 2015.
- Homophobic and racial chanting against footballers and fans at some FIFA Cups.
- Scrutiny of the human rights record of sponsors – in London 2012, for example, there were heated debates about Dow Chemical's legacy from the Union Carbide Bhopal tragedy.

Human dignity and human rights are non-negotiable; they should not be seen as unwelcome bureaucratic encumbrances adding red tape, nor be dismissed as part of a box ticking exercise. They are what sporting events of all kinds are themselves meant to be about – a celebration of human excellence, of what is best. The very legitimacy of major international sporting traditions rests on these values. They have no social license if they do not fully embody in every way human rights both on the field of play, and in the processes involved in organising the events – the processes of tendering, bidding, acquiring land, constructing stadiums and other infrastructure, managing supply chains, providing security, arranging and raising sponsorship money, and maintaining the legacy of each event after completion. This means, for example, that sports governing bodies like the IOC and FIFA need to start to include within their candidature requirements for nations bidding to host these events a requirement to carry out human rights impacts assessments, in a way that they already ask for environmental impact assessments.

This year – 2015 – may be the year in which this is fully acknowledged for the first time. Last week we saw political commitments from the G7 on business and human rights – we welcome similar commitments to respect for human rights from major sporting bodies – such as the one the Commonwealth Games Organising Committee made ahead of the Glasgow 2014 Games and more recently, and by Formula One thanks to broad based civil society action. As well as initiatives from the Local Organising Committees, like London's creation of an independent watchdog, the Commission for a Sustainable London 2012; the Sustainable Sourcing Codes implemented by Vancouver, London, Rio and Glasgow; and the ground-breaking Complaints and Dispute Resolution mechanism piloted during the London Olympics. In 2012, the UK,

Brazilian, Russian and South Korean Governments signed a communiqué in London on the Olympics and human rights – let us now see this in practice.

I feel confident this will be the year for such commitments. But we cannot wait decades for the implementation of conduct consistent with human rights standards. There is no need to wait – we now have some valuable tools on the table. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and their full incorporation into the updated OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises are highly relevant to all aspects of mega-sporting Events, from planning to execution and follow up.

At the Institute for Human Rights and Business, we have been developing a programme of work to assist those involved in planning and implementing these complex events. We've developed a website - www.megasportingevents.org - with the support of the Governments of the UK and Brazil that provides extensive information and a compilation of good practices from London 2012, Glasgow 2014 and Rio 2016 Games as well as some of the human rights challenges all these and other events face.

We are working now to ensure that sports governing bodies, host governments and organising committees for the next great events – Russia 2018, Tokyo 2020 and Qatar 2022 – are fully aware that there is a baton of knowledge and practical experience that can be passed from event to event about how to fully integrate concern for human rights principles and standards into all aspects of hosting such events. Indeed my organisation and our partners the Caux Round Table in Japan have just published a proposed Human Rights Statement on our websites for public consultation, which we plan to encourage the Tokyo Organising Committee, TOCOG, to adopt later this year.

Leadership is also needed from sponsors, contractors and suppliers – and perhaps the ultimate of all suppliers, the athletes and sports stars themselves. A number of leading voices in sport have started to speak up – if you dedicate your life to sport shouldn't the events that celebrate excellence in sport live by the same principles as you do?

These issues have come into sharp focus recently because of the corruption allegations that some FIFA executives and others now face. FIFA is not alone - other sporting bodies have had to deal with allegations of dope testing and betting, as well as questions concerning sponsorship. Corruption is no friend of human rights, and sport is about fair play. Corruption thrives in contexts of insufficient transparency, accountability and good governance: human rights are most at risk in such environments.

But the question of how much these events cost is very real. The Oslo 2022 Winter Olympics bid was heralded as the strongest in human rights terms, but the people of Oslo also decided they could not afford the price tag. This has in many ways been the experience of Brazil 2014 and Rio 2016 – huge infrastructure bills, involuntary resettlement and requirements to pass specific laws through parliament that threaten the rights of peaceful protest and freedom of expression. If these events cost such astronomical figures to deliver - \$10 billion to \$20 billion are considered reasonable estimates – we need all ask the question: are they worth the expenditure, and could that money be better spent on matters such as addressing poverty and inequality? The Games need to be more accountable democratically, and there is a strong case – a political case as well as a business case – for reform.

So where do we go from here?

As I am sure most of you know, there are at least two complaints in relation to mega-sporting events within the OECD National Contact Point system, one with the UK NCP in relation to Formula One in Bahrain, the other with the Swiss NCP in relation to the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. Others on this panel will set out some of the human rights issues at stake I am sure. Some might question whether sports bodies are covered by the OECD Guidelines or not. Are sports governing bodies economic actors in the same way businesses are? Whilst many sports federations are constituted as non-profit organisations, the holding of the event is clearly a huge commercial activity. Equally important, to ask whether they are covered by the OECD Guidelines or not actually misses the point entirely – as ‘organs of society’, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights applies to them as well, and are clearly covered by the direct responsibilities for respecting human rights outlined in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

2015 needs to be the year in which all major sporting bodies signal that human rights due diligence is an expectation of all future bids from candidate cities and nations. Similar messages from major sponsors and suppliers would be welcome. We can then all work together in developing the necessary tools, oversight bodies and remedies needed to turn this aspiration into concrete action. There is much learning within the UN, OECD and elsewhere that we can bring to bear.

The Olympic Agenda 2020 shows that the IOC has started to recognize the extent of the challenge. It has opened up to stakeholder dialogue and promised significant reform, including on several human rights issues. The speech by FIFA Executive Theo Zwanziger to the European Parliament in 2014, in which he pledged to “give human rights a higher status” in the FIFA host bidding process, seems to indicate similar movement on behalf of FIFA. From a human

rights perspective, stakeholder dialogue must be a 'rights-holder' dialogue: consulting with those most marginalized, and including conversation about steps to mitigate the potentially negatively impacts of the events, and respecting the voice of citizens and human rights defenders. Human rights considerations need to be integrated all the way through the event lifecycle, from bidding to legacy.

Our aspiration is to work with others towards the creation of a permanent and impartial body of learning that can sit across sporting traditions. Such a structure could advise the work of cities, governments, sponsors, civil society and trade unions and could play an important oversight role including support for local independent bodies for each event. I am pleased to report that a number of governments are supporting this endeavour and so too the leaders of some sports bodies, key sponsors and other NGOs and UN agencies such as UNICEF. Let us all work together and make the vision of Paris – mega-sporting events and human rights - a fully sustainable one, so that we move faster, higher, stronger, towards a world of dignity and equality, where the pursuit of excellence is underpinned by respect for human rights.