

# **International Olympic Committee and the International Federations**

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The underlying tendency in Pierre de Coubertin's revival of the Olympian Games in modern times was to make them truly international. This aim and its creative content

have now become a reality. Today we could hardly envisage the Olympic Games without the co-operation of the International Sport Federations, nor the development of world sports without the existence of the Olympic Movement and the Olympic Games.

The International Olympic Committee and the International Sport Federations work independently of each other and have their specific fields of action. But they have one thing very much in common — the aim to develop physical education and sport on a mass scale in every country, to bring up a generation that is healthy and fit to promote peace and friendship among the people's of every nation.

Such co-operation has its mutual responsibilities. The International Federations should help propagate and consolidate the Olympic principles, and the International Olympic Committee should take into account what the International Federations are doing for the popularization and development of the different sports.

At first sight these mutual obligations seem somewhat general and formal, more like an appeal to goodwill. In actual fact there are increasing instances of practical co-operation. Depending on the conditions of the moment, the results are at times very satisfactory, at others less.

What form could the co-operation between the International Olympic Committee and the Sport Federations take in the present concrete environment? The essentials could perhaps be summed up in four points :

- 1) Unity of thought and action against discrimination in the field of sport.
- 2) Joint assistance to the development of physical education and sports in the newly-formed countries of Africa and Asia.
- 3) Suppression of conditions and tendencies infringing the principles of amateur sports.
- 4) Closer collaboration when determining the extent of the Olympic programme and improving the sporting and technical level of the Games.

In 1962, the International Olympic Committee took a firm stand in defence of its Olympic principles against any form of racial religious or political discrimination in sports. During the first half of 1963 the International Olympic Committee Executive Board had two meetings with representatives of the International Federations. The information we have at hand clearly shows that these were not merely formal consultations, but an expression of their common desire to take joint action in the fight against discrimination in sports. The International Sport Federations and their top executives have an important role to play, although unfortunately it is not always seen in the right light.

We remember a commentary that appeared towards the end of 1962 in the *Sport* (Zurich), in which some unknown author expressed vexed surprise that the president of an International Sport Federation, and a Swiss at that, should have signed the Appeal addressed by eight Federations to the UN and to the governments of certain member-countries, demanding the elimination of obstacles impeding the normal development of international sport relations. The whole article was in a spirit of belligerent irreconciliation. One had the feeling that the anonymous writer had been unable to curb his fury in the presence of the unity of view and action between the International Olympic Committee and the International Federations in a matter where the sporting press should be expected to be the last to find fault and resent.

The President of every International Sport Federation is the Alderman of a large and composite family. It is not enough that he should not favour one member at the expense of another. It is far more important that even close in his heart he should feel no differentiation. His stand should not be theoretical, but concretely linked with certain established principles, the basic of which is full equality among all members of the one large family. They take part in the Olympic Games, of which the gates are wide open to all. A President of an International Sport Federation overlooking this fact or for a moment inclined to show prejudice would hardly be worthy of his post.

In spite of the overt or dissimulated efforts of those who, for their particular designs, may resent unity within the world sports movement, the *rapprochement* and collaboration between the International Olympic Committee and the Federations will safeguard the basic principles of the Olympic Movement from harmful encroachments.

As regards the elimination of all conditions which might constitute a breach of the principles of amateur sports, the International Olympic Committee cannot expect to succeed in the implementation of its policy without the support of the International Federations. While dogmatism in this respect has proved futile, concrete International Olympic Committee - International Sport Federation co-operation to turn the amateur code into a living reality requires further efforts. The essential point here, in our view, is to give sportsmen opportunities of training for a definite profession, which will give them a rightful place in society. Neither the International Olympic Committee nor the Federations can play the role of probation officers, but the Federations should be able to exercise proper control over the vocational training and working careers of top sportsmen, and should bear in mind the initiatives taken by the National Olympic Committees in this respect. This is an important problem, which should always be given prominence on their agenda and their activities. Here the Inter-

national Sport Federations can play a valuable social and educational role.

The Olympic Programme has not always reflected full unanimity between the International Olympic Committee and the International Federations. The International Olympic Committee has tended to show concern that the Games may become over-expensive, while the International Sport Federations pursue the aim of developing their different sports on the broadest possible basis. No doubt, such development will never be full without the support of the Olympic Movement. On the other hand, one should not overlook the fact that the development of sports is not isolated from the general upswing witnessed in all spheres of economic and cultural life of every country. The development of one sphere should not handicap the development of another. Something that has been once built should be put to good use. Closer co-operation has been achieved in this respect too, but still better results could be reflected in the promotion of the development of the different sports in every country.

The general aspect and content of the Olympic Games have been steadily changing over the years, reflecting the athletic progress the world is making. But the results would be even more favourable with closer collaboration between the International Olympic Committee and the International Sport Federations as regards the Rules under which the competitions are staged, the problems of judging, refereeing, and the like.

The International Olympic Committee initiative to meet with the representatives of the International Federations on a concrete issue, like discrimination in sports, was most timely and effective. We trust that the International Olympic Committee may call such meetings on more frequent occasions, dedicating each to a specific problem, demanding unity of action. Such meetings are certain to give new ideas and elaborate new forms and approaches to the problems. The practice of calling such meetings only once every two years for general discussions no longer seems to meet the case. The International Olympic Committee and the Federations could add more points to the list, and thus co-ordinate their activities on a far broader basis. Every National Olympic Committee would no doubt welcome closer and more direct relations.