



**Second Preparatory Meeting of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development  
Green Economy, Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication**

**7 - 8 March 2011, New York**

**Statement by Tomas A. Ganda Sithole, Deputy Permanent Observer for the International Olympic Committee to the United Nations**

The Co-Chairs, Distinguished Delegates,

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) conveys its compliments to the Commission on Sustainable Development and is honored to have the opportunity to address you today on the contribution of sport to the issue of green economy, sustainable development and poverty eradication.

As the theme of this meeting suggests, sustainable development and a green economy are not just good for our planet. They are also good for its habitants.

The Olympic Movement is deeply committed to being environmentally responsible. We can trace the roots of our engagement to the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and the development of an Agenda 21 for Sport and Environment. This landmark event, which was the beginning of a groundswell in the elevation of environmental care and sustainability to the very core of humankind's survival, was a global catalyst for environmental awareness and the sporting community heard and heeded the call. Environmental issues were at the top of the agenda for the first time when the Centennial Olympic Congress met in Paris in 1994 to chart the Olympic Movement's future a century after its creation. As a result, the International Olympic Committee began to embrace sustainable development as part of its core mission.

One of the first steps was a cooperative agreement with UNEP to conduct a number of initiatives addressing the relationship between sport and the environment. That partnership has grown and continues to bear fruit. In due course, we have developed partnerships with relevant organizations, most of them UN related, to advance global peace, stability and prosperity. These partnerships transcend the traditional definition of sport. The IOC interpretation of sport is that of an important tool for the implementation of sustainable development. Therefore, the incorporation of the environment as the third pillar of Olympism alongside culture and sport in the Olympic Charter was intended to give impetus and emphasis our original mission of placing sport at the service of humanity.

It is important to mention that a number of our partners are the corporate supporters who drive the economy, create jobs and are true believers in environment and sustainable development in its wider interpretation. In partnership, we work to enable a betterment of the social and economic needs of people to learn, live with dignity and play a positive role in society. Our collective efforts include combating social exclusion and discrimination of any kind, promoting gender equality and healthy lifestyles, education for all and, in general, supporting the UN MDGs.

Indeed, the Olympic Games are meant to be a celebration of Olympic values and athletic achievement. However, their significant contribution in managing social, economic and environmental opportunities to produce lasting benefits locally and globally, are immense and quantifiable. The organization of the Games includes environmental sustainability as a core principle and consideration. As an illustration, the creation of the Youth Olympic Games in 2010 was a deliberate decision to provide a unique platform to inspire, educate and inform young people around the world of Olympic values, and particularly the benefits of sport for a healthy lifestyle and its social impact. It is the Olympic Movement's added value to ensure that youth of today and tomorrow will play an increasing and decisive role in civil society.

By incorporating environmental considerations in every aspect of the Olympic Games, from the earliest planning stage to the post-Games legacy, we are leading by example in the design and construction of infrastructure and transportation systems. The 2010 Vancouver Games set a new standard for environmental sustainability on multiple levels. The Olympic Village and the populated area surrounding it received high ratings for applying green construction practices and principles and are considered a model for sustainable urban planning. Prior to Vancouver, the city of Beijing used the Olympic Games to spur its own green revolution by developing economic processes that were based on sustainability. This created and imbued in young people a culture of environmental care and firmly put in place a nation-wide development of a green transportation system, green manufacturing processes and green construction.

The lessons learnt and the media attention on these environmental innovations at the Games encourage the wider community to take similar steps. Importantly, these are not only potential Olympic Games organizers but countries, federations and national associations who are putting together lower profile competitions such as regional and grass roots competitions across the globe. Going forward, our commitment to the environment is stronger than ever. The most recent Olympic Congress, in 2009, reaffirmed the importance of environmental protection and sustainability and recommended a series of specific actions to embed environmental sustainability throughout the Olympic Movement. In this regard, I refer to workshops, educative toolkits and initiatives with National Olympic Committees at country level, with International Sports Federations and relevant non-governmental organisations.

We strongly support the Rio +20 process and will continue to work closely with the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. In parallel, we are updating the Olympic Movement's Agenda 21 to issue a contemporary call to environmental action in this new millennium.

Distinguished delegates,

The lessons from the past two decades are clear: the world must be moving towards a green economy. Sustainable development will lead us in that direction with the additional potential to alleviate poverty. The Olympic Movement will play its role in this development process. What is necessary is a consensus that sport can be a valuable partner in achieving the goals that society is setting for itself, that it can be an effective tool for development, for peace, for emancipation and building a better world.

The year 2012 and Rio are important markers for the Olympic Movement. Our colleagues in London are organizing Games that we all believe will set new sustainability standards in terms of venue constructions, Olympic Village, education, gender equality related to athletes' participation and environmental awareness. London will be followed by Rio 2016, the second time that the Olympic Games will have travelled to that part of the world. In the interim the Winter Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup will take place in Sochi and Rio respectively.

Rio+20 therefore represents a whole new meaning to the Olympic Movement. It symbolizes a renewed call for action. However, only you can mainstream the contributions of sport to the achievements sought by the international community. Our hope and expectation is that it will be so honored.

I thank you for your attention.

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