



International
Olympic
Committee

73rd session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme

10 – 14 October 2022

Agenda item 3: General debate

Statement by the International Olympic Committee

Chair, High Commissioner, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In a year that has seen major crises, the International Olympic Committee stands by UNHCR and is more supportive than ever and in admiration and gratitude to the staff who, on a daily and continued basis, deliver protection and humanitarian assistance to an unprecedented number of people forced to flee their homes across the globe.

Through supporting the Olympic Refugee Foundation, The IOC remains fully committed to play our role in the Global Compact on Refugees. Notably, one of the fifteen recommendations outlined in Olympic Agenda 2020 + 5, the roadmap for the Olympic Movement is specifically dedicated to support displaced populations through sport.

We know, through three decades of partnership with UNHCR, that Sport can have the most incredible impact on young lives. Ensuring access to safe sport for young people affected by displacement can play an increasingly important part of the international response.

Indeed, the 4th principle of the Olympic Charter states that *The practice of sport is a human right. Every human being must have the possibility of practicing sport, without discrimination of any kind...*

The impact of sport on forcibly displaced people spans from elite through to community level and through the power we have to mobilise and leverage a multitude of stakeholders at scale.

We continue our support for refugee athletes, with 50 elite athletes currently receiving scholarships through Olympic Solidarity to continue training and vie for a position on the 3rd IOC Refugee Olympic Team at the Olympic Games Paris 2024 where they will, again be a symbol of hope and example of how refugees can enrich society.

Additionally, In February the IOC Executive Board established the Solidarity Fund for the Ukrainian Olympic Community now totalling 7.5million USD. Led by President of the

National Olympic Committee of Ukraine and IOC Member, Sergii Bubka, and with the support of the Olympic Movement, the fund has spent 1.8million USD to meet immediate humanitarian needs of the Ukrainian elite and high level athletes affected by displacement and is now focusing on Ukrainian athletes preparation for and participation in upcoming Olympic Games in Paris and Milan-Cortina.

The Secretary General in his report on Sport: catalyst for a better; stronger recovery for all, presented at the 77th session of the UN General Assembly acknowledged;

72. One underutilized application of sport is facilitating the social inclusion of refugees and migrants....and 92. Sport is an effective tool...providing psychosocial support to people recovering from conflict and disasters...

To date, the Olympic Refuge Foundation has invested more than 6million USD in programming and technical resources to enhance the scale and quality of sport for protection programming, supported 13 programmes in 10 countries extending access to safe sport to around 100,000 young people affected by displacement. More than 800 sport coaches and community/youth workers have been trained in the sport for protection approach.

Analysis of data in our Ugandan sport for protection programming show positive early results with a significant improvement in participants overall feelings of wellbeing as well as a 67% decrease in levels of anxiety and 69% decrease in depression.

Sport can be a practical, efficient and culturally appropriate mechanism to impact at scale and needs to be embedded fully into the humanitarian response and, more specifically by the Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) sector. One in five people living in displacement contexts experience a mental health issue and the role of physical activity and sport to respond effectively to this pandemic is being increasingly recognized.

Together with UNHCR and the SCORT Foundation, the Olympic Refuge Foundation convenes the Global Sport for Refugees Coalition launched on the occasion of the Global Refugee Forum in 2019, and formed by over 80 organisations from different sectors all committed to:

Promoting, increasing and ensuring access for all refugees to safe and inclusive sporting facilities; organised sports and sport-based initiatives; and participation in sporting events and competitions at all levels.

Legal and administrative barriers such as quota regulations or documentation requirements can limit refugees access to sport particularly in regard to residency and travel permits.

We commend UNHCR and partners for including sport in the Ukrainian Regional Refugee Response Plan and encourage systematically embedding sport into national/regional refugee response frameworks to facilitate stakeholders including sport into their ongoing response.

It is clear that, today, we can only live up to the new IOC Olympic motto – Faster, Higher, Stronger - Together, by working together in solidarity.

THANK YOU