

# **LOOKING BEYOND THE HUGE MEDIA EVENT** **THE OLYMPIC GAMES ARE**

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## **ABSTRACT:**

The aim of this article is to highlight the basis, values and positive impacts of the Olympic Games. Besides being a major event, the Olympic Games bring with it, important values and ideas; they try to send a message to the world. This year will be focused on children and refugees. Not to mention, the value of the Olympic Truce itself, that is recognized by the international community and its customs.

## INTRODUCTION:

Only a few days away from the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, it is time to take a look beyond the big media event itself and pay attention to the essence of the Olympic Games. Since the first games, in Athena in 776 BC, considering at least those that were recorded, one of the main goals of the Olympic Games has been to promote peace, diversity, communication and reconciliation among the world's nations. These principles were the main drivers behind the establishment of the *Ekecheiria* (Olympic Truce) when the world was at a constant state of war.<sup>1</sup> It was, under this scenario of conflict that the Greeks wanted to gather all the athletes in the same place for them to compete as equals; despite their nationalities and despite the political situation of each country. A place that, under the Olympic Truce idea, would be considered as sacred and hostilities-free.

As generations passed by, the Olympic Truce became one of the instruments for establishing and maintaining peace and, a practice accepted by almost all the international community of states. The latter is reflected in the General Assembly's multiple resolutions addressing the Olympics and the world peace and development,<sup>2</sup> and the number of countries which accepted such resolutions and put into practice programs aimed to spread the Olympic Truce. Not to mention the high-level of support received by other UN organs and international organizations such as the UNESCO. The Olympic Truce today is seen as

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<sup>1</sup> The tradition of the "Truce" or "Ekecheiria" was established in ancient Greece in the 9th century BC by the signature of a treaty between three kings. During the Truce period, the athletes, artists and their families, as well as ordinary pilgrims, could travel in total safety to participate in or attend the Olympic Games and return afterwards to their respective countries. As the opening of the Games approached, the sacred truce was proclaimed and announced by citizens of Elis who travelled throughout Greece to pass on the message. See <http://www.olympic.org/content/the-ioc/commissions/public-affairs-and-social-development-through-sport/olympic-truce/>

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.un.org/events/olympictruce/resolutions.shtml>

the idea of making a better world, a world where tolerance is one of the most important principles that everyone should respect, a world of reconciliation; as a proof that institutions can make a better world if the world cooperates.<sup>3</sup> An idea that is not that much idealistic since, for instance, in the 2000 Olympic Games which took place in Sydney, the audience saw North and South Korea marching side by side, action that was thought to be almost impossible when analyzing their political and social relation.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, it is not just a hope for a better world and “little” actions supporting such a hope, but the Olympic Truce, as mentioned before, also brings equality. Equality in the sense that every nation has the same right to participate in the games, and equality in the sense that the rules apply symmetrically to all participants regardless of their nationality, their political and social status and, regardless of their gender. At a domestic level people are equals under the law; under international law, each country counts as one, and the same is here. Competitors are equal under the law and principles of the Olympics. Thus, individual differences should be tolerated and stereotypes might disappear.

#### **THE OLYMPICS AND ITS VALUES:**

The Olympics are a perfect moment for countries to show themselves not only sportily but also, the perfect moment to show the other nations their developments and how much they have changed. Thus, the worldwide spread of the mass-media contemporary Olympics are an opportunity to promote values, ideas and visions. As it was in 2008 for China, for whom the Olympics allowed the communist government to prove the western world how much

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001339/133907s.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Koreas to March into Olympics Together, ABC News (last accessed: July 6, 2016). Available at: <http://abcnews.go.com/Sports/story?id=100609>

open they had become. Brazil, this 2016, is supposed to be another example by making the protection of boys and girls the theme of the Rio Olympic Truce.<sup>5</sup> Since, according to the Brazilian declarations,<sup>6</sup> the goal behind this year's Olympic Games is to promote the rights of the children by using the sports as a tool for the transformation and promotion of global values. Taking into consideration the number of people who watch the games every four years, each host city is empowered to spread an idea, and its perspective regarding a certain issue. However, at the same time, each host city carries the responsibility to spread a valuable message aimed at peace, tolerance and world connection; to spread the Olympic values<sup>7</sup> and the Olympic Truce.

As it was stated above, the Brazilian Olympic Games, aim to promote the rights of the children, proposal that was presented at the UN General Assembly and was supported by 180 countries which accepted to co-sponsor the Rio 2016 Olympic in which, as the former president of the International Olympic Committee Thomas Bach said, “[a]thletes from all 206 National Olympic Committees are [going to] liv[e] together in harmony and without any kind of discrimination”. 206 national committees that are going to be contributing to the *Transforma* programme (name of the Rio 2016 education programme) benefiting a total of about one million Brazilian school children and, hopefully, many more

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<sup>5</sup> Protection of boys and girls is theme of Rio 2016 Olympic Truce proposal (last accessed: July 6, 2016). Available at: <http://www.rio2016.com/en/news/protection-of-boys-and-girls-is-theme-of-rio-2016-olympic-truce-proposal>

<sup>6</sup> Speech by Carlos Arthur Nuzman, President of the Rio 2016 Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, to the UN General Assembly in New York on 26 October 2015, on the occasion of the adoption of the Olympic Truce resolution (last accessed: July 6, 2016). Available at: [https://www.rio2016.com/sites/default/files/users/Samuel%20Green/carlos\\_nuzman\\_speech\\_to\\_un\\_oct\\_2015.pdf](https://www.rio2016.com/sites/default/files/users/Samuel%20Green/carlos_nuzman_speech_to_un_oct_2015.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Olympic Charter 2015, page 13 [http://www.olympic.org/Documents/olympic\\_charter\\_en.pdf](http://www.olympic.org/Documents/olympic_charter_en.pdf)

abroad by offering courses also to teachers with the goal of spreading their new knowledge to even more children.<sup>8</sup>

Adopting the proposal of the UN Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP) which recognizes sports “as an integral part of quality education [that] can be used to mobilize and educate individuals (especially youth) and communities”,<sup>9</sup> children and all individuals can acquire fundamental values and valuable social skills through sports. Belief that was also manifestly supported<sup>10</sup> by the Singapore government when hosting the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) in 2010 and promoted by numerous of international organizations.<sup>11</sup> Hence, it is clear that although the Olympics pursue to spread their social and moral values worldwide, the Olympic Movement makes explicit emphasis on the children’s incorporating and learning of the ideas and specific conducts the Olympic Games try to project.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Rio 2016 education programme to go global with online launch (last accessed: July 6, 2016). Available at: <https://www.rio2016.com/en/news/rio-2016-education-programme-to-go-global-with-online-launch>

<sup>9</sup>See Achieving the Objectives of the UN through Sports, pag. 8. Available at: [http://www.un.org/wcm/webdav/site/sport/shared/sport/pdfs/Achieving%20the%20Objectives%20of%20the%20UN%20through%20Sport\\_Sep\\_2011\\_small.pdf](http://www.un.org/wcm/webdav/site/sport/shared/sport/pdfs/Achieving%20the%20Objectives%20of%20the%20UN%20through%20Sport_Sep_2011_small.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> See Culture and Education Programme (CEP) Explanatory Brochure. Available at: [https://www.dosb.de/fileadmin/fm-dosb/downloads/YOG/CEP\\_GeneralInformation\\_EN.pdf](https://www.dosb.de/fileadmin/fm-dosb/downloads/YOG/CEP_GeneralInformation_EN.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Such as WADA (which focused mainly on anti-doping prevention), the IOA (which focused mainly on Olympism), UNICEF (which focused mainly on children’s rights and responsibilities), UNEP (which focused mainly on climate change and biodiversity), IFRC (which focused mainly on first aid, blood donation, and accident prevention), CIPF (which focused mainly on fair play), UNAIDS (which focused mainly on HIV/AIDS education and prevention), and UNEP (which focused mainly on climate change and biodiversity) [http://doc.rero.ch/record/24317/files/2011\\_-\\_Different\\_Perspectives\\_on\\_the\\_CEP\\_of\\_the\\_YOG\\_-\\_DOLL-TEPPER\\_G..pdf](http://doc.rero.ch/record/24317/files/2011_-_Different_Perspectives_on_the_CEP_of_the_YOG_-_DOLL-TEPPER_G..pdf)

<sup>12</sup> To bring together the world’s best young athletes and to celebrate them; 2. To offer a unique and powerful introduction to Olympism; 3. To innovate in educating and debating the Olympic values and challenges of society; 4. To share and celebrate the cultures of the world in a festive

The Olympic Movement's insistence on sport as a human rights, on sports as a tool for education, on sports as a forum of intercultural exchange and equality... reflect the existence of a mission beyond what most people believe the Olympic Games are. Olympism goes beyond a global sports competition and its impact is much more significant than just recognizing the athletes' performance with medals. From the first moment, when the host country is to invest in its city in order to make all services available and in conditions for the Olympic Games, to the closing ceremony of the games, countless things happen in order to permit the successful realization of the games. The efficient promotion of the Olympic Movement values, can only be achieved by the carrying on the Games; the games have a significant values of their own so they should not be cancelled.

I address this last point regarding the Rio 2016 Olympic Games whose cancellation by the IOC, for a moment, was under debate because of the Zika virus. Not only, as stated by the World Health Organization (WHO), "the 2016 Olympics will not significantly alter the international spread of Zika virus"<sup>13</sup>, but also, cancelling even temporally the games will generate anger and discontent among the Brazilian citizens who have suffered the costs of building the infrastructure needed to host the Olympics<sup>14</sup>; not to mention this would

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atmosphere; 5. To reach youth communities throughout the world to promote Olympic values; 6. To raise sports awareness and participation among young people; 7. To act as a platform for initiatives within the Olympic Movement; 8. To be an event of the highest international sporting standard for young people. [http://doc.rero.ch/record/22125/files/2010 - Torres.pdf](http://doc.rero.ch/record/22125/files/2010_-_Torres.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> WHO public health advice regarding the Olympics and Zika virus (last accessed: July 6, 2016). Available at: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2016/zika-health-advice-olympics/en/>

<sup>14</sup> Violent protests in Brazil over cost of World Cup and Olympics (last accessed: July 6, 2016). Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/brazil/10126626/Violent-protests-in-Brazil-over-cost-of-World-Cup-and-Olympics.html>. Public Money to Cover More than Half of All Private Projects Ahead of Rio Olympics (last accessed: July 6, 2016). Available at: <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/internacional/en/sports/olympicgames/2014/08/1496453-public-money-to-cover-more-than-half-of-all-private-projects-ahead-of-rio-olympics.shtml>. Brazil protests

impair the promotion of the “rights of the children” which is the theme of the Rio 2016 Olympic Truce and the most important goal behind this year Olympic Games.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Taking everything into consideration, it will not be incorrect to conclude that the Olympic Games are much more than a huge media and competitive event which gathers athletes from all over the globe. The Olympic Games, with the basing idea of the importance of the Olympic Truce in mind, is a mean to promoting multiple ends. Among these ends, it is noteworthy to highlight the spread of social values, common ideas, the goal of embrace a mutual feeling of community among the nations despite the fact the athletes are competing between each other, to promote peace, and to send messages to the world population and States’ government.

Not to mention that the fact that the Olympic Truce has been incorporated as a constituent of the international community of States practice, raise a hope for a possible world permanent peace. Even admitting that the path towards the world peace is going to be fraught with obstacles and pitfalls, resulting in a snail's pace journey, the positive effects of the Olympic Movement make, at least in a long term, this idealistic idea not fully impossible.