

PNUE

Nairobi June 26th, 2014

President of the United Nations General Assembly,

Dear Doctor John Ashe,

President Kenyatta

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a honor to be among you today both in my capacity of Head of State and representative of the International Olympic Committee, as Chairman of the IOC Sport & Environment Commission.

I have great pleasure to be in the home city of one of Africa's most distinguished figures and a great champion for the empowerment of women, the environment and peace - Professor Wangari Maathai.

She inspired the UNEP Billion Tree Campaign, that I have supported as co-patron.

As we deal with the many challenges threatening our environment, let us remember her timeless words “*we cannot tire or give up. We owe it to the present and future generations of all species to rise up and walk!*”

It is in that spirit that we address this first United Nations Environment Assembly with the conviction that what we do hereinafter will have a significant impact for the protection and the preservation of the natural resources of our Planet. It is our responsibility towards our children and grand-children.

Our Assembly, the first of its kind ever and two years after Rio+20 where leaders from around the world agreed to focus their policies towards sustainable development, will serve as a platform to define the foundations of “The Future We Want”.

It must result in reinforcing our Planet, stimulating its mechanisms of resilience to maintain the vital functions provided to us by its ecosystems until we are able to mitigate the negative impact of the uncontrolled development of recent decades.

It must result in identifying the measures for accelerating progress on the Millennium Development Goals and in marking the fundamental role of the environment in the post-2015 Development Agenda.

It must result in global efforts to create a transformative, actionable and accountable sustainable development agenda tackling the twin objectives of world development and earth sustainability.

Our Agenda will also deal with the slaughter of thousands of terrestrial and marine species due to illegal trade. It jeopardises the future of local communities,

disrupts the entire balance of ecosystems, sustains criminal and terrorist networks, feed the corruption and exposes the life of those who have mission to fight against poaching.

My Government and my Foundation are also engaged in the fight of these crimes against biodiversity to protect flora and fauna by supporting the relevant Conventions or directly enabling governments and NGOs to have access to means of fighting, dissuasion and prosecution.

I would like to congratulate the United Nations Environment Program for being increasingly vocal and successful in defending the environment within the United Nations, a role it has had for over 40 years.

Respect for the environment is embedded in the philosophical foundation of the Olympic Movement.

As early as the 1890's, the founder of the Modern Olympic Games and educational reformist, Baron Pierre de Coubertin had the notion of putting "*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.*"

Today, this vision of Olympism as leading to social and economic development continues to be relevant and is mirrored in carving out the Sustainable Development Goals, re-committing to the founding principles of sustainability, marching to a common purpose and instilling common values.

The International Olympic Committee and its president, Mr Thomas Bach, are dedicated partners in this important cause. The Olympic Movement has a direct interest in environmental issues and is committed in using its global reach to support the goal of sustainable development and to encourage reduction of environmental impact of sporting events.

Although the Olympic Games had taken symbolic steps to support the environmental movement as early as 1972, the 1994 Lillehammer Olympic Winter Games in Norway were the first to clearly include environmental considerations in Games planning and operations.

Advances in recycling, building design, waste and water management, construction processes and other green innovations have become a regular feature at the Games, encouraging others to expand the frontiers of sustainable development.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the partnership between the IOC and UNEP, which began with an agreement to collaborate on projects encouraging environmental sustainability.

That initial agreement led to a continuing series of similar partnerships between UNEP and Olympic Host Cities. UNEP plays an important role in helping Host Cities live up to their environmental commitments.

Under the leadership of President Bach, the IOC is conducting a comprehensive examination of issues related to the future of the Olympic Movement. The Olympic Agenda 2020 initiative includes discussions on ways to become even more effective in advancing sustainability.

The IOC is also committed to working with the United Nations and other stakeholders to ensure that sport

plays a significant role in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Our discussions here will assist these efforts to help to bring us closer “towards a life of dignity for all”.

The call for action is now and the International Olympic Committee is ready to use the convening power of sport as a means to reach out and maximize the achievement of the Sustainability Development Goals.

Specifically, this relates to using Sport to:

- build inclusive, safe and sustainable cities with an accent on recreation, sport and play areas;
- promote physical activity and a healthy life for all;
- provide equitable and life-long learning opportunities through quality physical education.

In addition, Sport can be a valuable cross-cutting tool to:

- promote gender equality and empower girls and women;
- serve as a tool to prevent conflict and build peace
- function as an important player to rally communities by engaging youth, bridging cultural divides in a spirit of non-violence leading to mutual respect and friendship.

The universal law of sport and its popularity can serve to enrich the process of learning towards our greatest resource – young people, in order to change our way of life and ultimately lead to prevent in the future further damage to our Planet's ecosystems.

It is time to recognize this contribution and act upon it by using Sport as a tool to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.

10/12

You can count on my support and the International Olympic Committee's engagement to serve the interests of our Planet for future generations.

Thank you.