

## HE JOSÉ MANUEL RAMOS-HORTA

Keynote speaker • President of Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste



ORIGINAL TEXT IN ENGLISH

It is a real privilege to be here in Copenhagen, a city that has already written history through your choice of Rio for the 2016 Olympic Games, and to address the Olympic Movement at your Congress.

I could not begin my speech without telling you that witnessing the intense process of selecting the city for the 2016 Games was indeed a most interesting learning experience, illustrative of the magic of the Olympic Movement. The emotions that filled the auditorium throughout the proceedings are testament to the power of sport, and the magic that you, the guardians and keepers of the Olympic flame, continue to inspire through the work of your organisation.

May I commend you all, but especially allow me to pay tribute to President Rogge.

You, President Rogge, in your choice of the central themes for the first Congress in 15 years, have focused on universality and developing countries. Olympic history will bear testament to you, President Rogge, as the first International Olympic Committee (IOC) President in history to lead the Games in Beijing, China's great coming-out party, and London, where the Games will, for the first time in history, regenerate one of the most impoverished communities in Europe. And now, in 2016, the Olympic spirit will reach the hearts and minds of the favelas of Rio, when the Games take place in South America for the first time. This is truly a gigantic achievement.

President Rogge, the road that you have walked thus far has institutionalised the Presidency of the IOC as a role of statesmanship. You have shaken the dust off the memory of Pierre de Coubertin by bringing the symbols of his Movement into modern society and modern institutions.

You have returned the Olympic Truce to centre stage at the United Nations (UN), and it has been unanimously supported thanks to your tireless efforts. You are also achieving observer status for the IOC at the UN, thus putting your Movement at the heart of the decision-making corridors of the world.

And already, midway through your presidency, you have achieved a solid legacy for your Movement, a legacy that not only embraces the hope the Olympic flame can inspire, but also demonstrates the generosity of

the Olympic family to the world. It is an honour for me to stand among you today.

When I look out from the shores of Timor-Leste and reflect that we are the youngest nation in the world, I stand in front of you totally committed to the view that it is the young people whose vision we have a duty to inspire; it is the young people who, through the ideals of the Olympic Movement, can one day guide, support and motivate the world in which we live. Here we have a common concern and a common challenge, to which your Movement has responded by creating the Youth Olympic Games (YOG).

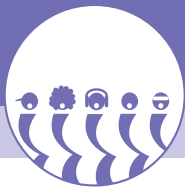
My country, Timor-Leste, is the world's youngest democracy, and joined the UN in 2002. Fifty percent of our population of 1.2 million are below the age of 20, which gives us hope for the future but also presents us with enormous challenges in providing them with educational opportunities and enabling them to develop healthy minds and healthy bodies. The struggle to achieve the independence and freedom of my country has forged everything I stand for. It stems from a belief that we need to put the interests of young people first; that unless we provide a better, more stable future for them, we will have failed our generation. And so, there is nowhere in the world more capable of inspiring that generation than here, today, in Copenhagen, where the future of the Olympic Movement is to be determined and where decisions must be taken to map the future of the world's young people through sport, peace and the ideals which bind us together through the values of Olympism.

In that context, the key factor determining the successful future of your Movement is the balance between "Olympism and Youth". I firmly believe that young people are the personification of the unique impact that sport can deliver. Humility in winning, team work, empathy and sympathy for those who lose, and strength through solidarity are far more important than the commercial rewards reaped by the individual winner. Youth is the vehicle, the vehicle which must guide our actions. Whether in the work of teams of young people who help me to clean the beaches of my homeland or here in the cities of Western Europe, it is the mosaic of universality, which must guide us and drive forward the Olympic Movement.

For while I am here to talk to you on this issue as the leader of my country and people, I am also here as a father, a community member a concerned citizen, and someone who is passionate about the world of sport and the values with which the Olympic Movement can provide young people; a beacon of hope in the darkness that too often surrounds their impoverished lives. I hope that what I have to say today will give you some food for thought and some ideas to steer the Movement into the future.

When we consider sport and physical activity more generally, it is easy to see its benefits to the health and well-being of our young people worldwide. We do not need to be reminded that regular physical activity promotes a "healthy mind in a healthy body". Aside from the obvious health benefits of physical activity, sport, particularly competitive sport, holds a tremendous amount of social potential and can – if we tap into this potential – serve a much broader purpose.

Sport helps to mobilise entire communities and nations like no other human activity. Sporting personalities are idolised by young fans all over the world. As many countries, my own included, will attest, sport is an effective "bottom-up" approach to peace and community building, as it



emphasises social integration, confidence building and team work. For many young athletes, competitive sport is about overcoming personal difficulties and achieving defined goals. At the international level, we can come up with many examples, many of them from recent editions of the Olympic Games, where sport has transcended political and national rivalries. But there is a risk that the virtues of sport may become a cliché in a world plagued by war, famine, poverty, disease and the nefarious impact of climate change. Indeed the words “sport” and “physical activity” jostle for attention at a time when “economy”, “recession”, “inflation”, “depression”, “terrorism” and “global warming” have taken centre stage.

We cannot diminish the importance of battling global warming. As we meet here today, thousands of people have lost their lives and livelihoods from American Samoa and Samoa to Indonesia. While earthquakes are a natural phenomenon of the movement of tectonic plates, these natural disasters nevertheless remind us of the fragility of our lives on this planet.

In this very city, in December, world leaders and thousands of members of civil society will gather to celebrate, let us hope, a credible and effective protocol that will be a first step in repairing the damage that we have all done to our planet. Otherwise, we shall leave Copenhagen even more divided between the old industrialised countries, which have contributed more to climate change, the newly industrialised countries like India, China and Brazil, which are trying to catch up, and the rest of us, small island states, least developed countries, which have not seen much benefit from industrialisation and modernisation and yet are becoming the main victims of climate change.

It is not helpful to point fingers at each other; the poor blaming the rich for the nefarious effects of climate change. The poor must do small things, or even big things, in their own countries, as I do in my country: planting trees, stopping the deforestation caused by slash-and-burn agriculture or unscrupulous logging, cleaning our rivers, lakes and seas. If all the nations were to do this, we would already be able to reduce global emissions by up to 25%. When mother earth is plagued with a cancer of this magnitude, it is not surprising that sport becomes less prevalent in the vocabulary of our young people. Sport is little used as a policy tool to help solve some of the pressing issues of the moment. To my mind, this is an oversight on the part of the international community, as sport, with its cross-cutting influence, could be an extremely effective tool in helping to achieve many of the UN Millennium Development Goals. That is exactly the reason, President Rogge, that your achievements in bringing the Olympic Truce back to the UN, and bringing the IOC to UN observer status as stated by the UN Secretary-General, are such monumental achievements, not only for your Movement, but as a step towards harnessing the power of sport to help heal the world.

According to research by the World Health Organisation (WHO), physical inactivity is a key modifiable risk factor for non-communicable disease. Yet estimates indicate that nearly 17% of the world population is physically inactive and that an additional 41% is insufficiently active to benefit their health. And the news gets worse. In 2004, non-communicable diseases accounted for 60% (i.e. 35 million) of the total deaths in the world (58.8 million).

An estimated 45% (i.e. 15.8 million) of people who died from non-communicable diseases died prematurely (before the age of 70) from preventable heart attacks, strokes, diabetes and asthma. Seventy-nine percent (i.e. 27.5 million) of deaths from non-communicable diseases

occurred in the world's 144 low and middle-income countries. An estimated 50% (i.e. 13.7 million people) who died from non-communicable diseases in these countries died prematurely from preventable heart disease, strokes, diabetes, cancers and asthma as a result of 1) increased levels of exposure to tobacco use, unhealthy diets, physical inactivity and the harmful use of alcohol; and 2) ineffective and inequitable health care services for people with non-communicable diseases. I think that you will agree with me that these are worrying trends, more so because they are a realistic indicator of where our current generation is headed. This is not the world I want for the young people of my country, and I do not think it is what anyone wishes for their children. It is important to ask why we are seeing these declining trends in physical activity. In many countries today, sedentary behaviour among young people is on the rise, primarily due to the increase in urbanisation. In 2007, the proportion of the world's population living in cities surpassed 50% for the first time in history, and this proportion is growing. By 2030, 60% of people will be city dwellers, rising to 70% by 2050. At a time when all forms of sport have the opportunity to really become a force for change, many young people are turning to sedentary activities for entertainment due to a lack of green spaces and recreational centres at their disposal.

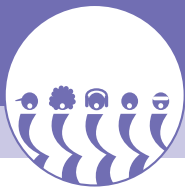
I personally believe that the decline in physical activity and participation in sport has to do with cuts in education budgets and policies at the highest levels that do not give enough emphasis to sport in education, particularly in poor communities in the rich countries. No doubt this aspect will be debated at length in the breakout sessions to follow.

But we now need to see the wood for the trees and focus on getting our young people more physically active. Faced with many of today's challenges and problems, we must use sport to provide them with a more constructive way to deal with the challenges they face in their daily lives. We must take action and we must take it now.

If we are to prevent sport from falling off the social agenda altogether, it is important that we take determined steps to reverse this trend. I argue this point as a parent. We set the example, and it is up to us to give our children the tools to deal with life's challenges. Choosing the healthy option does not have to be difficult. But it has to become part of our everyday lives, and we have a responsibility to help our children make that choice. At the national level, sport must be made compulsory in schools. With urbanisation on the rise, national governments must make every effort to include recreational facilities in the development and planning of their cities. As the WHO argues: “Urbanisation is here to stay. It is an irreversible trend that is now part of the world in which we live.”

At the global level, countries must unite – as they have on issues concerning the climate and, more recently, nuclear disarmament – to find ways of effectively promoting physical activity. The WHO recently launched an initiative entitled “1000 Cities, 1000 Lives” that will begin in April 2010. Not only will it bring awareness of the need for people to get up and get active, but it is an important step forward in putting the issue high on the national agendas of countries the world over. It is a strong signal that we need to make a concerted effort to do something about a problem that threatens to become as urgent and critical as that of global warming or poverty.

If we want to get our children healthy and get them moving, it is time to meet them on their own terms. Technology is ubiquitous in the lives of our young people today, and our children are becoming more



technologically savvy by the day. But, all too often, we shun these technologies, believing that they are at the root of today's problem among our young people. However, I believe that today's gaming industry holds a tremendous amount of potential and could be the key to encouraging our children to adopt a healthy lifestyle. We must not be afraid of embracing what technology has to offer.

I applaud the IOC for developing the YOG. Here is an excellent example of how to use sport, not only to promote healthy competition among the young people of the world, but also to use sport to promote culture, education and peace. We have to start thinking in a more holistic manner. The IOC has provided an excellent model of integration and collaboration through the YOG, and collaborative efforts with other International Organisations will no doubt reap great benefits in the future.

But we have to remember that the YOG, like sport itself, are not a panacea. The aim should be for the value and spirit of these sports events to live in our young people long after the Olympic flame has burned out. Sport and physical activity must be made a more integral part of our everyday lives. Similarly, the information and work that we have shared over the course of the Congress must not be left in Copenhagen once this beautiful city closes its doors to the Olympic Movement after the event. My challenge to each and every one of you today is to take back what you have learnt over the three days of the Congress and apply it in your own communities. If we want the Olympic Movement to really live in society, it is time to take bolder steps, and what better time than now?

Throughout history, young men and women have been sent by political leaders to fight in foreign lands, landing on shores they had never been to before, killing and being killed without having met the people they were sent to subjugate (some say to liberate), without knowing their language, culture and beliefs.

Such has been the history of humanity – a humanity, endowed with intelligence and feelings, that has nevertheless perpetrated abominable violence on itself and on the planet that God gave us as our common home. Sometimes we act like lesser beings, the bigger devouring the smaller. Big countries invade small countries. Nations often go to war out of fear, ignorance, prejudice or greed about the other side and what the other side might possess.

But if we were to talk, communicate, learn more about each other; if we were to share resources, the richer helping the less fortunate, the stronger helping the weaker, we might have less violence in our own communities, and there would be fewer wars between countries. There would be a future for our children, who currently face a war to save their planet against climate change, against violence, and poverty.

So, we who are here today can empower them by giving them the tools, the vehicles, the means they need, through sport, that will equip them to in turn pass on the baton to the generation that will succeed them.

This Movement is one that I have long admired, as it embraces values that are akin to my own: peace through understanding, hope through example, strength through adversity, the creation of a future not through the goals of individual ambition but through team work, respect and responsiveness for those who win and those, in life, who face the pain of losing.

I stand before you as a proud citizen of Timor-Leste, who has led my people to fight for the values of friendship, respect and solidarity. Your Olympic principles, through the power of the Olympic torch, radiate across the world and must never be taken for granted. They shine a light deep into the recesses of nations across the globe. They are the fragile torch which history has handed us down from Olympia. They require tending, nurturing and supporting. While the bedrock principles of the Olympic Movement stand firm, you reach into the hearts and minds of the world's people.

It is clear to me that President Rogge has, in his leadership, truly achieved the values that you embrace – friendship, respect and excellence. He has taken those values off the field of play, and has harnessed their essence to propel your Movement forward in the world. Through him, the Olympic family has opened its arms and embraced nations and peoples that, in return for the gift you have given them, will light a beacon of hope and faith for a better world, through the medium of sport.

Daily in my country, my people mourn those who are no longer with us, who lost their lives in an epic struggle for freedom. We celebrate by honouring the many heroes who fortunately are still with us today. We celebrate by building a future for our young. We celebrate also by making a renewed commitment to building a peaceful, democratic and prosperous nation, to root out violence and extreme poverty in one generation! The poor who have been poor for centuries must not remain poor! It is the energy of my young nation which I give to you all here today as an example of the ideals embodied in your own Olympic Charter. It is my hope that we can have a real impact on the lives of our peoples, by shining the light of your Olympic torch on the youth of our world.