



YOUTH SPORT EVENTS

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I am deeply honoured to have the responsibility of being the moderator for this session dealing with the subject “Youth sport events”. This is an important aspect of the overall Theme 4 of the Congress and I am looking forward to a very vibrant discussion on the subject. We are fortunate to have a most distinguished panel of persons with vast experience in sport and sports administration, and I have no doubt that our session will benefit greatly from this resource pool. They will be introduced separately.

Olympism and Youth is indeed an extremely important consideration, as was evidenced by the presentations at the Plenary Session earlier today. However, it is clear that there are many different approaches to the subject, and this is also true of youth sport events. This is demonstrated clearly in the background papers circulated for this session. In particular, you should note the data contained in the study done on the 24 different youth sport events, showing the different approaches to such events, the vastly different age groups that represent young people, and the mix of sports and events (disciplines).

Obviously, each of the owners/organisers will have determined the ages and events based on their respective goals and objectives, but, if nothing else, the data indicates that there is no common approach. At the same time, we should note the unique concepts that are being applied to the make-up of the first Youth Olympic Games (YOG) in 2010.

Youth sport events are organised for a variety of reasons: as part of a sports development process, for recreational purposes, and as an integral component of physical education.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGIES

I do not think that we need to debate the importance of sport in development, in the economy, in health, in education, in socialisation and so on in this session. Rather, we need to turn our attention to the benefits to youth, whether sports events are adequately addressing their needs, and what other actions should be considered to further benefit the young people of the world.

Some of the issues that we could think about are:

- defining “youth”, because there does not seem to be a universal definition;
- whether existing youth sport events are satisfying needs, and whether there are places in the world that do not have such events;
- whether there is a case for rationalising such events and, if so, by whom;
- whether there is a need for more such events, and whether there should be uniformity in conditions for participation;
- how these international and regional events relate to domestic events and, where financing is a problem, which is more important.

In the Caribbean we have a number of youth sport events. The main ones are:

- the annual Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA) championships in athletics and swimming for under 17s and under 20s; and
- the annual Jamaican Boys and Girls Athletic Championships for under 19s in three different categories.

Athletics being a particularly strong sport in the region, there is participation in the IAAF World Junior Athletic Championships for under 20s and the World Youth Athletic Championships for under 18s. Complementing these are some regional athletic events such as the Pan-American Juniors and North American, Central American & Caribbean (NACAC) Juniors.

I believe we have more than enough material to occupy us over the next hour, and by the end I hope we shall have a number of recommendations to make to the various authorities for the advancement of youth sport events.