Forum: General Assembly Third Committee

Issue: Implementing measures to “green” the world of sport

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Introduction

Environmental concern and climate change are in the centre of public eye which have made the promotion of sustainability in and through sports more urgent than ever. Sustainability is undeniably of vital importance since whatever we need for our survival and prosperity depends on our natural environment. In 2015 the United Nations acknowledged the social role of sports and highlighted them as one of the most “important enablers” to achieve the Agenda of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, in 1992 the UN adopted Agenda 21 which is a non-binding action plan that emphasizes the importance of sustainable development. Agenda 21 was officially signed in the Earth Summit (UN Conference on Environment and Development) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. While the importance of sustainable development has been globally recognized, the environmental impact of mega sporting events, such as the Olympic Games, FIFA, World Cup etc. has been an issue of serious concern for policy makers.

On the other hand, the IOC’s (the International Olympic Committee) green initiatives include the sustainable management of venues’ low carbon programmes and sourcing with the view to placing top priority on ecological preservation, conservation of resources and environmental friendliness. Moreover, many sporting venues and stadiums have set an outstanding example regarding the implementation of ground breaking green initiatives aiming at the promotion of environmental sustainability through sports. Stadiums are outdoing each other in providing environmentally friendly venues to host major sporting events.

In that respect, the implementation of LEED (Leadership in Energy Environmental Design) and BREEAM (the international Building Research Establishment Assessment Method) accreditation systems mainly focus on the assessment of the sustainability credentials of stadiums based on certain criteria. What is more, FIFA has invested on sustainable infrastructure regarding all official FIFA World Cup stadiums under construction or renovation. For that reason, it has introduced green building certification as a compulsory requirement. The aim of this FIFA requirement is to guarantee that the construction and renovation of stadiums are carried out in a more sustainable manner.

Additionally, many alliances have been formed such as GSA (Green Sports Alliance) which is a non-profit organization that helps the sports industry upgrade the performance and harness potential for large-scale behavior change. Furthermore, many multinational companies have already tried to minimize the waste that is being produced by the manufacturing of sports equipment and clothing by using recycled materials. Last
but not least, the impacts which are common in large public organizations, and hardly limited to sports, include irreversible damage to fragile ecosystems, noise and light pollution, energy use and emissions, soil and water pollution as well as waste generation.

Definition of Key Terms

Sustainability:
In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), set up in 1983, published a report known as «Our common future». It is a document recognised as the «Brundtland Report» named after the Commission’s Chairwoman Gro Harlem Brundtland.

Sustainability and its principles first appeared in the Brundtland Report and was elaborated for the United Nations in order to warn about the negative environmental impact of economic development in a globalized world.

Its top priority is to offer solutions to the problems caused by industrialization and population growth.

Nowadays, sustainability focuses on safeguarding present needs without compromising the future generations providing for environmental protection, social development and economic growth.

“Greening” sports:
Due to the fact that sporting events bring so many people together, they constitute a natural place for involving a wide public in thinking sustainably about waste.

Both International and National Sports organizations and events have been getting active in that field by offering an invaluable platform to teach the do’s and don’ts of environmental responsibility with the view to setting and achieving sustainability goals. They have started adopting environmental guidelines aiming at impacting the incoming generation, the Millennials, which constitute the next spenders on sports. It is more than vital that the Millennials’ attitude towards sports be primarily eco-conscious, showing ultimate respect for green initiatives.

Climate change:
Climate change is the widely used term all over the global community which is associated with an increase in global average temperatures. It is a fact that temperatures have been on the rise around the world for many decades. It is estimated that world temperature will increase 3.7-4.8°C by 2100, which would cause irreversible damage – making coastlines vanish and turning our forests into savannahs. To make matters worse, 800 million people globally are already suffering the impacts of climate change.

Mega Sports Events:
Mega sporting events are defined as those one-time sporting events of an international scale organized by a special ‘authority’ which attract extremely high levels of media coverage. Due to these events' significance and size, the host community could either benefit or be negatively impacted by them.

Multinational Companies:
A multinational company is a business that operates in many different countries at the same time. In other words, it's a company that performs business activities in more than one country. e.g. Nike, Adidas etc.

Background Information

Established measures to achieve sustainability in the world of sports

The United Nations have recognized the importance of the contribution of sports to the environment with a significant record of General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions, UN treaties, Secretary-General’s reports and other guiding documents highlighting the unique potential of sport.

The historic adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 were followed by the Sport for Development and Peace community displaying strong interest in continuing to use sport as a vital tool to support this new global plan of action. UN Member States recognized the contribution of sport to the SDGs, Heads of State and Government and High Representatives declared in the Political Declaration for the new Agenda:

“Sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development. We recognize the growing contribution of sport to the realization of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives (2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development A/RES/70/1, paragraph 37).”

This recognition offers a great opportunity for further joint efforts and action in the field of “Sport for Development and Peace”. With the view to leaving no one behind and maximizing the contribution of sport to serve the purpose of a better and peaceful world, sport will continue supporting development as a powerful enabler of the SDGs, as it did for the preceding MDGs. Sport’s potential should focus on the promotion of synergy, coherence and harmonization of programs for the effective and immediate implementation of the SDGs.

Overall, the global reach and appeal of sport is an extraordinary tool at our disposal for promoting a global outlook on sport at the service of advancing the achievement of the SDGs. The contributions of sport to the SDGs highlighted and analyzed in this overview, reflect the experts’ experience and therefore welcome input of various SDP players, including UN entities and sport and development organizations, which have used sport and recognized its value as a most effective and versatile tool for facilitating development and leading to peace outcomes.

This overview addresses sport’s role and potential in relation to all 17 SDGs, taking into account the importance of each goal. While doing so, it however distinguishes between the SDGs where greater evidence and practice with regard to the contributions of sport were pinpointed – marked with the SDG wheel symbol - and those SDGs where sport has a more indirect potential of minor importance.

Finally, the present overview aims at informing, inspiring, encouraging and supporting sports’ contributions to the SDGs by relevant stakeholders including States, entities of the United Nations system, sport-related organizations, sport federations and
associations, foundations, non-governmental organizations, athletes, the media, civil society, academic society as well as the private sector.

**Actions taken by mega sports events to achieve the sustainability in this domain**

Qatar’s organizers for the 2022 World Cup have undertaken to meet an obligatory requirement from FIFA to deliver a zero-carbon tournament in all their 12 venues nine of which are new and the other three, renovated, that will be zero-carbon emissions.

In the Olympics of Tokyo 2020 serious efforts have been made with the view to recycling electronic devices into Olympic medals as well as reducing and offsetting CO2 emissions. A carbon offset Programme, that has been put into practice, aims at offsetting unavoidable CO2 emissions. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government is a keen supporter of this programme. In addition to the aforementioned, in December 2018, Tokyo 2020 was one of the first signatories of the UN Sports for Climate Action Initiative.

Beijing 2022 was primarily committed to organize “green inclusive, open and clean games”. With the full support of state Grid Corporation of China, all Beijing 2022 venues will be powered by green electricity. 25% of all Olympic venues power came from alternative energy sources like sun and wind.

**Actions taken by multinational companies to “green” the world of sports**

In June 2019, Adidas and Parley of the Oceans launched for the second consecutive year the Run for the Oceans movement that fights against sea plastic pollution and hosts over 12 major running events across six cities including weekly running activities with 50 Adidas Runners communities worldwide. The revenue raised by this movement were given to over 100,000 families who are living in coastal areas that suffer from the consequences of air pollution.

Moreover, Adidas creates more than 5 million pairs of shoes that are made by recycled plastic. The cotton used for the making of clothing equipment is “sustainable cotton” that means that is sourced according to the standards of the Better Cotton Initiative or organic cotton.

In 2019, Nike launched its comprehensive “Move to Zero” sustainable plan that builds upon existing efforts to fight climate change that include Nike’s effort to power sports facilities with100% renewable energy by 2025 and function with net-zero carbon emissions. This plan is made to “help protect the future of sport”. This program contains the elimination of single-use plastics in global Nike campuses and it invests on the existing circular design products such as its FlyKnit shoes and jerseys which are made out of recycled plastic bottles.

Furthermore, Nike organized an exhibition in New York that was dedicated to the findings of the studies on the impact of global warming on specific sports. This exhibit describes how some states have adopted rules to protect players from dangerous conditions that are caused by climate change and that affect their training conditions and performances. Nike has also created the Environmental Apparel Design Tool-software that makes it possible for clothing designers to make greener design choices, such as reducing the amount of waste and choosing materials that are more eco-friendly while taking into serious account, rather than underestimating, the cost, quality and performance. In 2010 Nike released this tool for free so that the whole industry could reduce this environmental impact.
Green Sports Alliance

GSA (Green Sports Alliance) has been committed to endorse and support a list of UN Climate Action Principles that include the following:

- “Principle 1: Undertake systematic efforts to promote greater environmental responsibility;”
- “Principle 2: Reduce overall climate impact;”
- “Principle 4: Promote sustainable and responsible consumption”
- “Principle 5: Advocate for climate action through communication.”

The members of the alliance are encouraged to follow the guidance and recommendations of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change by reducing and offsetting all greenhouse gas (GHG) impacts.

The implementation of the Olympic Movement’s UN Agenda 21

Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally by organizations of the United Nations System, Governments, and Major Groups in every area in which human activities impact the environment.

Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and the Statement of principles for the Sustainable Management of Forests were adopted by more than 178 Governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3 to 14 June 1992.

The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was created in December 1992 to ensure effective follow-up of UNCED, to monitor and report on the implementation of the agreements on the local, national, regional and international levels. It was agreed that a five year review of Earth Summit progress would be made in 1997 by the United Nations General Assembly meeting in special session.

The full implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Commitments to the Rio principles, were strongly reaffirmed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg, South Africa from 26 August to 4 September 2002.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

WWF

WWF has been actively involved in the sports sector by contributing in big plans for London 2012 and Paris 2024 Olympics that will be regarded as blueprints for future sustainable sporting mega events. Their Clean Water alliance with FISA, the World Rowing Federation has achieved sector-leading environmental policies including the first-ever sports federation pledge to do no harm on World Heritage sites. Moreover, through their long time partnership with UEFA they have advised on sustainable event best practice and tournament bidding criteria including Euro 2020. Finally, they have presented staff sustainability champions to UEFA.

UNFCCC

The sector and UN Climate Change have launched the Sports for Climate Action Framework rally sports organizations, teams, athletes and fans in a united effort to raise climate awareness and inspire action to meet the goals of Paris Agreement.
The representatives of the diverse global sports industry, working with the UN Climate Change created a Framework to drive emissions reductions in sports operations and to tap the mass passion associated with sports to engage millions of fans in the effort.

**Green Sports Alliance (GSA)**

GSA (Green Sports Alliance), being an environmentally-orientated trade organization, is in full support of the ideal that sports offer a uniquely dynamic platform which can embrace sustainability and put it into practice in the sports field.

This environmentally-orientated trade organization has gained great publicity since 2010, as its members represent almost 300 sports teams and venues from 20 sports leagues as well as 14 countries. GSA’s top priority is to provide the world with healthy and sustainable communities where mega sports events could be hosted with invaluable benefits for the wellbeing of all people and preservation of the environment. It is a pre-requisite for GSA that UN Climate Action Principles are fully respected and all the members of the Alliance are encouraged to strictly follow the guidance and the recommendations of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and offsetting all greenhouse gas (GHG) impacts.

**Australian Open**

Margaret Court Arena was reconstructed in a sustainable way and was awarded the LEED Gold Certification (the second highest accolade bestowed by the US Green Building Council after Platinum) thanks to its sustainable design. More specifically, it won six out of six points for sustainable innovation due to the installation of a cool roof that reflects the sun’s heat and was widely recognized for sustainably sourcing its timber as well as for its cooling systems.

**FIFA World Cup**

FIFA World Cup has invested on sustainable infrastructure regarding all official FIFA World Cup stadiums under construction or renovation. For that reason it has introduced green building certification as a compulsory requirement. The aim of this requirement is to guarantee that the construction and renovation of stadiums are carried out in a more sustainable manner focusing on the design of stadium regarding environmental concerns that will lead the way towards more sustainable operation of all stadiums in the long run.

**NBA**

NBA has signed to the Sports for Climate Action Framework. With its popularity among millennials and one billion people around the world with access to the NBA Finals, such an act is definitely the biggest green step taken by the league till present days.

**IOC (the International Olympic Committee)**

The IOC’s green initiatives include the sustainable management of venues low carbon programmes and sustainable sourcing with the view to placing top priority on ecological preservation, conservation of resources and environmental friendliness.

The IOC (the International Olympic Committee) reformed its working practices aiming at the sustainability principles successfully. IOC has assumed a leading role in the UN Sports for Climate Action Initiative, the aim of which is to drive climate action across the sports community.
United States of America (USA)

The U.S. National Football League (NFL) plays the carbon counting game with the view to balancing the greenhouse gas emissions of Super Bowl XL, played 5 February 2006 in Detroit, the NFL argued with scientists at Oak Ridge National Laboratories and Princeton University, who supported that a plot planted with 250 native Michigan trees would absorb 75 tons of carbon over the trees’ life span. The NFL ultimately planted 2,500 trees over 10 acres in Michigan to equal the Super Bowl’s carbon emissions.

FIA (Federation International de l’ Automobile)

FIA (Federation International de l’ Automobile) has adopted an Environmental Accreditation Programme with the view to helping motor sport stakeholders worldwide measure and ameliorate their environmental performance. This programme introduces clear and consistent environmental management into motor sport and provides stakeholders with a framework against which to accredit their activities. In order to achieve this the FIA has launched a set of guidelines and documents based on internationally recognized environmental standards and guidelines.

UEFA

UEFA EURO 2020 will be the focal point in a European Commission funded project aiming at ameliorating the effectiveness of environmental management of football events. The project is called TACKLE (Teaming Up for A Conscious kick as a Legacy to our Environment) and its main goal is to increase awareness about environmental sustainability. UEFA EURO 2020 will be staged in 12 countries across Europe.

Timeline of Events

1992  Agenda 21 was signed
1995  International Olympic Committee’s Sport and Environment Commission was formed
1994  UN International Year of Sport and the Olympic Ideal was launched
1999  Olympic Movement Agenda 21-Sport for Sustainable Development applying the UN’s Agenda 21 to sport was published
2007  International Olympic Committee received the UNEP Champion of the Earth Award
2009  IOC was granted official observer status by the UN General Assembly
2010  Green Sports Alliance was founded
2012  United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)
January 2017  The IOC’s Sustainability Strategy was launched
May 23, 2017  Sport and Sustainability International was founded
December 12, 2018  Sport4Climate initiative was launched
June 5, 2019  UEFA released its football and social responsibility report on environmental awareness

June 2019  Adidas and Parley for the Oceans launched the Run for the Oceans movement
September 2019  Nike publicized its “Move to Zero” sustainability plan
Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Agenda 21 in 1992 that was signed in the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- In September 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs, were agreed
- The 2030 Agenda are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

UN Involvement

In 2015 in a UN Summit the 17 Sustainable Goals were adopted by world leaders as a plan of governments. The eradication of poverty, inequalities and the management of climate change and the insurance of all while protecting the planet this presupposed the cooperation of the private sector and the civil society.

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP), a veteran influencer player in this arena was one of the first players to get involved in the sports sustainability movement. In 1994, UNEP created a Sports and Environment Program, and charged with raising awareness on the impact of sports on the environment through sports as well as with the design of sustainable sports facilities and equipment. Furthermore, in 1994, the Centennial Olympic Congress of Paris established the environment as a “third pillar” of the Olympic charter along with sport and culture. In 1995 UNEP teamed up with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to organize and host the first World Conference on Sport and Environment, held in Lausanne, Switzerland the participants of this conference created a Sport and Environment commission within the IOC. In November 2005 the latest world conference was held in Nairobi that yielded the Nairobi Declaration on Sport, Peace, and Environment, which called upon the IOC and national Olympic committees to play the role of leaders in promoting environmental sustainability through sports.

UNEP has also organized three meetings of the Global Forum for Sport and Environment (G-ForSE) since 2001, in which sports stakeholders in and beyond the Olympic Movement analyze their contributions to sustainable development. In July 2005, Sports Summit for the Environment, a G-ForSE meeting held in Aichi, Japan, participants signed the Joint Declaration on Sports and the Environment, in which they promised to help solve environmental problems and create a sustainable world society through sports.

UNEP has also worked with the IOC with the view to developing an “Agenda 21” for the Olympic Movement based on environmental sustainability guidelines created by delegates at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development. The adoption of its own Agenda 21, IOC committed itself to supporting sustainability among its member nations and sports governing bodies. This agenda is being used by several National Olympic Committees for sustainable development work at the national level.
Possible Solutions

Encouraging more countries to take a series of environmental protective measures implemented for the construction of new sport venues

Implementing Carbon offset Programmes to offset CO2 emissions

Installing renewable energy technology at sport venues

Promoting the making of a plan with the view to decreasing the impact of some materials on the environment such as consumer products and construction materials

Supporting the organization of educational programs that aim at the promotion of ways to make sports more eco-friendly

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