

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is the international non-governmental organization which conducts, promotes and regulates the modern Olympic Games. The IOC has its headquarters in Lausanne, east of Geneva. Its President is Jacques Rogge, an orthopedic surgeon and former Olympic athlete from Belgium.

The IOC, founded in Paris in 1894, is the supreme authority of the Olympic Movement; it owns all rights concerning the Olympic Games, and looks after their organization. The original Olympic Games date back to 776 BC, but the modern games were revived in 1894 at the initiative of French educator Pierre de Coubertin and held for the first time in 1896 in Athens, Greece, the birthplace of the Olympic ideal. The IOC promotes sport in the Olympic tradition by supporting regional games, strengthening ties among athletes of all countries, and seeking to guide modern athletics. The IOC's medical commission collaborates with other bodies dealing with research in sports medicine such as in the fight against doping.

The IOC ensures the regular celebration (every four years) of the Olympic Games, and selects the site where they will be held. Since 1994 the Games of the Olympiad (summer Olympics) and the Olympic Winter Games are no longer held in the same year but two years apart. The dates and locations of future games are: Athens, Greece, August 13-29, 2004; Turin, Italy, February 11-26, 2006; Beijing, China, 2008; Vancouver, Canada, 2010.

The IOC is the lead organization within the Olympic Movement. The movement also comprises the National Olympic Committees (NOCs – which officially ensure the representation of athletes from individual countries at Olympic Games), the Organizing Committees of the Olympic Games (OCOGs – formed in host cities to organize and stage games) the International Sports Federations (IFs – responsible for the technical organization of their particular sports at the Olympic Games), as well as national associations, clubs and the persons belonging to them, particularly the athletes.

At the end of 1998, the IOC was rocked by a serious crisis. Six IOC members were expelled in March 1999 and four resigned after being accused of receiving cash payments or other inducements related to visits to Olympic bid cities. In response, the IOC established a reform commission called IOC 2000, and the host city election process was revised to ban official visits by IOC members to bid cities. The IOC also created an independent Ethics Commission whose role is to draw up and update a code of ethics based on the values enshrined in the Olympic Charter.

DOPING IN SPORT

In 1999, the IOC hosted a World Conference on Doping in Sport in Lausanne, Switzerland where an agreement was reached to set up an independent international anti-doping agency to oversee the global fight against drugs. A product of the conference was the "Lausanne Declaration" which states that in future the Olympic oath will be

taken not only by athletes but also extended to coaches and other officials. The declaration stipulates a minimum two-year suspension from competition for any athlete found guilty of a first doping offense. More severe sanctions will apply to coaches and officials found guilty of violations of the anti-doping code. In November 1999, the IOC announced the establishment of the World Anti-Doping Agency, which has its headquarters in Montreal. WADA aims to provide a solution to drugs in sports by standardizing rules and providing an independent mechanism for testing. In March 2003, governments and sports federations adopted a World Anti-Doping Code at the second World Conference on Doping in Sport in Copenhagen.

OLYMPIC SYMBOL

The Olympic symbol, composed of five interlinked rings (each of a different color – blue, yellow, black, green, red – to represent the union of the five continents and the meeting of the athletes of the whole world at the Olympic Games), the flag (the five rings on a white background), and the Olympic motto carried on the flag (“Citius, Altius, Fortius” – Faster, Higher, Stronger), are the exclusive property of the IOC and cannot be used without its authorization. An Olympic Museum and Study and Research Center situated near IOC headquarters in Lausanne opened in 1993.

U.S. POLICY

The U.S. government maintains a liaison office on international athletic matters (in the State Department Bureau of International Organization Affairs). It is concerned with international athletic issues and events to which the United States sends teams of athletes, giving advice and support where needed on any aspect of U.S. participation in Olympic Games or other international sporting events. The liaison office is separate from the U.S. Olympic Committee (a non-governmental body responsible for representation of U.S. athletes at Olympic Games), but provides support to it.

BUDGET AND MEMBERSHIP

IOC membership is comprised of National Olympic Committees from 201 countries. The IOC’s principal income is from the sale of television rights for the Olympic Games. It also obtains funds through the international Olympic marketing program. (A percentage of total IOC revenues goes to the Olympic Games Organizing Committees. The IOC also makes grants to National Olympic Committees and International Sports Federations.)

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