



CIPRA
LIVING IN
THE ALPS

International Olympic Committee IOC
Thomas Bach, President
Château de Vidy
Case postale 356
1001 Lausanne
Switzerland

Schaan/LI, 25 February 2014

Olympics-free Alps!

Open letter to Thomas Bach, IOC President

Dear Mr Bach,

The 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi are over. They will go down in history as the most expensive and controversial Winter Olympics ever. However, the epilogue has yet to be written. Once the Olympians' sporting achievements and successes have ceased to make the headlines, any associations with "Sochi 2014" will be tainted, for a long time to come, by the oversized infrastructure, the environmental degradation and the negative impact on the population, not to mention the human rights violations and the imprisonment of environmental activists. As with the other venues that have hosted Winter Olympics in the past, whether in the Alps or elsewhere, the financial and ecological repercussions will remain visible and palpable for decades to come. The purpose of this open letter is not to go into the details of the negative repercussions of the Sochi Winter Olympics. For an idea of those repercussions, we refer you to the field reports on the Winter Olympics and the candidacies of recent years in the Alps, all of which are available on our website (<http://www.cipra.org/en/olympics>).

For nature and people alike, the burden imposed by the Winter Olympics has exceeded a threshold of acceptability. Our criticism is levelled essentially at the IOC and its rules and regulations governing the Winter Olympics. They include the practices involved in awarding the Games, the enormity and sheer scale of the Games, the one-sided contracts (Host City Contracts, etc.), the opaque financing, the deficit guarantees and the democratic deficiencies, as well as the indebtedness and other consequences for the communities and countries hosting the event. Not least, climate change and its impact on guaranteed snow are also playing an increasingly important role. The question that is emerging ever more clearly is whether it will even be possible to stage the Winter Olympics in the future and, if so, in what form?

CIPRA, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps, is an umbrella organisation that represents more than 100 organisations and institutions in the Alpine countries. In a resolution it is demanding that the Winter Olympics in their current form no longer be planned and held in the Alps. The experiences of the past decades have shown that the Alpine regions are not suitable for this environmentally destructive and commercialised major event. Recent referenda in Graubünden and Munich show that large sections of the population are increasingly unwilling to accept the burden of the Winter Olympics. Given that the IOC itself is unwilling to implement a radical change of

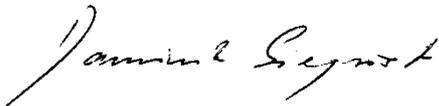
course for the Winter Olympics, the Alpine regions must draw their own conclusions, ensuring that the Alps remain Olympics-free, today and in the future!

With the IOC's regulations and contractual conditions as they currently stand, staging the Winter Olympics is no longer a responsible undertaking – either in the Alps or elsewhere. The IOC's procedures are non-transparent, and its rules and regulations are undemocratic. The host city contracts are formulated in such a way as to deprive the municipalities and the regions of any say in the matter. And while this IOC strategy may perhaps (still) prove successful in autocratically governed countries, for democratic nations like the Alpine countries the situation is untenable. Important issues such as the environment and sustainability (which are high on the agenda for the regions and the communities of the Alps) are mentioned in the application documents; but for the IOC, they are clearly not a matter of serious concern.

We are writing to you as IOC President to demand that you initiate a change of course for the IOC as well as a fundamental reorientation of the rules and regulations for planning and staging the Winter Olympics. This would include a return to a scale commensurate with the hosting venues and a transparent selection process based on democratic rules that apply to all parties involved.

We would welcome your reply and an exchange of views on this matter. And we would be more than willing to send a delegation to meet with the IOC.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dominik Siegrist', written in a cursive style.

Dominik Siegrist
President, CIPRA International