



## **The International Olympic Committee and the Olympic System**

The governance of world sport

**Jean-Loup Chappelet and  
Brenda Kübler-Mabbott**

# The International Olympic Committee and the Olympic System

When the athletes enter the stadium and the Olympic flame is lit, the whole world watches and billions will continue to follow the events for the next 16 days.

Readers of this book, however, will watch forthcoming editions of the Olympic Games in a completely different light. Unlike many historical or official publications and somewhat biased commercial works, it provides—in a clear, readable form—informative and fascinating material on many aspects of what Olympism is all about: its history, its organization and its actors.

Although public attention is often drawn to the International Olympic Committee, the athletes, the host cities or even the scandals that have arisen, the Olympic system as such is relatively little known. What are its structures, its goals, its resources? How is it governed and regulated? What does the International Olympic Committee actually do? What are the roles of the National Olympic Committees and the International Sports Federations? What about doping, corruption, violence in the stadium?

In addition to providing a wealth of information on these subjects, the authors show how power, money, and image have transformed Olympism over the decades. They round off the work with thought-provoking reflections regarding the future of the Olympic system and the obstacles it must overcome in order to survive.

This book is an in-depth yet highly accessible read for anyone interested in the Olympic Games, in Olympism, and indeed sport in general.

**Jean-Loup Chappelet**, PhD, is Professor of Public Management at the Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration (IDHEAP) associated to the University of Lausanne, Switzerland.

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# **Routledge Global Institutions**

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*The CUNY Graduate Center, New York, USA*

and Rorden Wilkinson

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The Global Institutions Series is designed to provide readers with comprehensive, accessible, and informative guides to the history, structure, and activities of key international organizations. Every volume stands on its own as a thorough and insightful treatment of a particular topic, but the series as a whole contributes to a coherent and complementary portrait of the phenomenon of global institutions at the dawn of the millennium.

Books are written by recognized experts, conform to a similar structure, and cover a range of themes and debates common to the series. These areas of shared concern include the general purpose and rationale for organizations, developments over time, membership, structure, decision-making procedures, and key functions. Moreover, current debates are placed in historical perspective alongside informed analysis and critique. Each book also contains an annotated bibliography and guide to electronic information as well as any annexes appropriate to the subject matter at hand.

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# Foreword

The current volume is the twenty-fourth in a dynamic series on “global institutions.” The series strives (and, based on the volumes published to date, succeeds) to provide readers with definitive guides to the most visible aspects of what we know as “global governance.” Remarkable as it may seem, there exist relatively few books that offer in-depth treatments of prominent global bodies, processes, and associated issues, much less an entire series of concise and complementary volumes. Those that do exist are either out of date, inaccessible to the non-specialist reader, or seek to develop a specialized understanding of particular aspects of an institution or process rather than offer an overall account of its functioning. Similarly, existing books have often been written in highly technical language or have been crafted “in-house” and are notoriously self-serving and narrow.

The advent of electronic media has helped by making information, documents, and resolutions of international organizations more widely available, but it has also complicated matters. The growing reliance on the Internet and other electronic methods of finding information about key international organizations and processes has served, ironically, to limit the educational materials to which most readers have ready access—namely, books. Public relations documents, raw data, and loosely refereed web sites do not make for intelligent analysis. Official publications compete with a vast amount of electronically available information, much of which is suspect because of its ideological or self-promoting slant. Paradoxically, the growing range of purportedly independent web sites offering analyses of the activities of particular organizations has emerged, but one inadvertent consequence has been to frustrate access to basic, authoritative, critical, and well-researched texts. The market for such has actually been reduced by the ready availability of varying quality electronic materials.

For those of us who teach, research, and practice in the area, this access to information has been particularly frustrating. We were delighted when Routledge saw the value of a series that bucks this trend and provides key reference points to the most significant global institutions. They know that serious students and professionals want serious analyses. We have assembled a first-rate line-up of authors to address that market. Our intention, then, is to provide one-stop shopping for all readers—students (both undergraduate and postgraduate), negotiators, diplomats, practitioners from nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations, and interested parties alike—seeking information about most prominent institutional aspects of global governance.

### **The International Olympic Committee (IOC)**

Most of the books in our series have so far concentrated on the more commonly recognized aspects of contemporary global governance. This book is something of a departure. While we do not embark on totally new terrain, by exploring the IOC we offer readers a book that deals with one of the less visible aspects of global governance.

At the same time, all statistics for newspaper readers, television viewers, and radio listeners indicate that sports are the number one interest in terms of popularity. Thus, this book fills a curious void in the contemporary literature on global governance. Moreover, since Jesse Owens's victories at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, it has not been possible to argue that such sporting events do not have a political impact. So, this book also fills a curious void in political science, where athletics are not a serious topic.

As political scientists are aware, social orders are crafted and perpetuated by a variety of means. Formal political institutions are but one means; informal civil institutions are another. The IOC is one such institution; it is an organization that has been instrumental in garnering support for a form of international cooperation clothed in the resuscitation of the Olympic idea. In this, the IOC has been remarkably successful. It has consistently brought together nations of the world at times when they have stood as foes, contributing in some, albeit small, way to the cause of world peace; it has borne witness to some of the greatest triumphs in the face of adversity and repression (of which Jesse Owens's triumphs remain the most memorable); it has been a place where the repressed have sought to bring continuing injustices to the widest possible public attention (with Tommie Smith's and John Carlos's 1968 Mexico City black power salutes being perhaps the most controversial); it has been the occasion to indicate major dissatisfaction

over interventions (with the US and other Western countries' boycott of the Moscow Olympics in 1980 being the most spectacular); and it has encouraged the creation of the Paralympics where differently abled athletes have been able to compete on the world stage.

The IOC has also had its fair share of controversy. The scandal surrounding Sydney's bid to host the 2000 Summer Games; the corruption scandal that erupted over the way the 2002 Winter Games were awarded to Salt Lake City (and the expulsion of members of the IOC that followed); the suspicions over the award of the 1998 Winter Games to Nagano (and particularly the entertainment expenses of the visiting IOC members); the accusations of misconduct by visiting members of the IOC to Toronto in 1991; and accusations of bias in the bidding process for host cities are just some of the most notorious.

The IOC is not an easy organization about which to write. Its relatively secretive and diffuse nature (spanning not only a formal organization but an entire movement) mean that few have a handle on both how the organization functions and the politics with which it has become infused. We were delighted, then, when Jean-Loup Chappelet and Brenda Kübler-Mabbott agreed to write this book for us. Jean-Loup is Professor of Public Management at the Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration (IDHEAP) associated to the University of Lausanne, Switzerland and a leading expert on the International Olympic Movement. He has an intimate knowledge of the IOC and of the Olympic movement; and he is one of the few scholars to have written widely on the subject. Brenda is, among other things, an author and translator who has had extensive experience with the IOC (having worked on IOC minutes as well as on the candidature files by cities wishing to host the Olympic Games). Together they make a first-rate team.

Needless to say, they have produced an excellent book. It comprises all the information necessary to gain a detailed understanding of not only the IOC but its role in global governance. As our readers will quickly discover, the book is clear, concise, authoritative, and meticulous. We know, and we are sure readers will agree, that it clearly deserves to be read by all interested in the International Olympic Movement as well as global governance more generally. We heartily recommend it and welcome any comments that you may have.

Thomas G. Weiss, The CUNY Graduate Center, New York, USA  
Rorden Wilkinson, University of Manchester, UK  
April 2008

# Acknowledgments

We are grateful to a number of IOC members—including presidents—and senior and junior staff who have interacted with us over the years, answering our questions and further explaining many questions related to Olympism. Many thanks also to the numerous representatives of National Olympic Committees, International Federations, and Olympic Organising Committees who have helped us better understand the Olympic system. It is of course impossible to name them all because some of these relationships date from almost 40 years ago.

A special mention should be given to our fellow Olympic scholars. We are a small group of maybe 100 persons around the world, regularly meeting at Olympic Games and other Olympic events and congresses. We have learned a lot from reading their publications and having insightful discussions with them. Space constraints in the bibliography did not permit us to name as many of them as we would have wished.

We would like to thank the editors of Routledge's Global Institutions series, Professors Thomas G. Weiss and Rorden Wilkinson, for inviting us to write this book and providing very valuable feedback and encouragement.

Finally, we would like to thank our families, in particular Sophie and Chris, for having supported us during the several months we took to write this work—and for their understanding of a passion for the Olympic idea that we have shared since we first met in 1981.

Jean-Loup Chappelet and Brenda Kübler-Mabbott  
Lausanne, Switzerland and Crest, France, December 2007



# Abbreviations

ANOC	Association of National Olympic Committees ( <a href="http://www.acnolympic.org">www.acnolympic.org</a> )
AGFIS	General Association of International Sports Federations ( <a href="http://www.agfisonline.com">www.agfisonline.com</a> )
ASOIF	Association of Summer Olympic International Federations ( <a href="http://www.asoif.com">www.asoif.com</a> )
AIOVSF	Association of International Olympic Winter Sports Federations
CAS	Court of Arbitration for Sport ( <a href="http://www.tas-cas.org">www.tas-cas.org</a> )
EU	European Union ( <a href="http://www.ec.europa.eu/sport">www.ec.europa.eu/sport</a> )
FIFA	Fédération internationale de Football Association ( <a href="http://www.fifa.com">www.fifa.com</a> )
IAAF	International Association of Athletics Federations ( <a href="http://www.iaaf.org">www.iaaf.org</a> )
IF	International Sports Federation
IOC	International Olympic Committee ( <a href="http://www.olympic.org">www.olympic.org</a> )
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross ( <a href="http://www.icrc.org">www.icrc.org</a> )
IPC	International Paralympic Committee ( <a href="http://www.paralympic.org">www.paralympic.org</a> )
NF	National Sports Federation
NOC	National Olympic Committee
OCOG	Organising Committee for the Olympic Games
TOP	The Olympic Partners
USOC	United States Olympic Committee ( <a href="http://www.usoc.org">www.usoc.org</a> )
UCI	International Cycling Union ( <a href="http://www.uci.ch">www.uci.ch</a> )
UN	United Nations ( <a href="http://www.un.org/themes/sport">www.un.org/themes/sport</a> )
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ( <a href="http://www.unesco.org">www.unesco.org</a> )
WADA	World Anti-Doping Agency ( <a href="http://www.wada-ama.org">www.wada-ama.org</a> )

# Introduction

The stadium, adorned with flags from throughout the world, is packed. On a central arena, thousands of performers present a rich, colorful spectacle to spectators both present and the millions throughout the planet watching it on television. At last, the parade of nations starts, beginning with the Greek delegation and continuing with those of every nation in the world, with that of the host country bringing up the rear. The world watches them, acclaims them, admires them. Then, the mood turns from festive to solemn, to dignified, as of the moment when a Head of State rises and proclaims a single phrase announcing the opening of sports competitions to celebrate a new Olympiad of the modern era. Bearers bring a white flag with five colored rings into the arena to the sound of the Olympic hymn, and it is raised high above the stadium. An athlete and an official take the Olympic oath. The world listens. Suddenly, a runner enters the stadium, holding aloft a torch that was lit by the rays of sun in Olympia, Greece, and then carried by a series of bearers, often for thousands of miles, before reaching what will be its unique home for sixteen days. The flame lights a cauldron that will burn, a visible and striking symbol of the sports competitions, for their entire duration. It will only be at the closing ceremony that this symbolic fire will be extinguished, marking the end of this, another edition of an event that has moved human hearts and souls for over a century. The world looks on, spellbound as the flame leaps forth, and then settles in to watch the athletes' exploits over the coming days: to share their joys, their sorrows, their emotions, their triumphs.

Who is not familiar with the Olympic Games, with their ceremonies, their symbolism, the athletes' achievements, and even some of the less glorious but highly publicized events surrounding them? But what about the system that has enabled the modern Games to go on from Olympiad to Olympiad since their renovation? Few individuals are