

GREECE: A CASE STUDY ON COMMITMENTS- RELATED BEST PRACTICE OR LESSONS LEARNED IN EITHER WATER AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

1. Which specific WSSD or Agenda 21 commitment does your case study address?

1.1 Agenda 21

The Olympic Movement considers the environment as the third pillar of Olympism, after sport and culture. This concept is in full accord with the philosophy of Olympism, which places sport at the service of the harmonious development of man.

The Olympic Charter was amended in 1996 to include the following paragraph on the role of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in the promotion of sustainable development according to the provisions of Agenda 21:

'...The IOC sees that the Olympic Games are held in conditions which demonstrate a responsible concern for environmental issues and encourages the Olympic Movement to demonstrate a responsible concern for environmental issues, takes measures to reflect such concern in its activities and educates all those connected with the Olympic Movement as to the importance of sustainable development.'

The Olympic Movement's Agenda 21 is an instrument setting out the general actions needed in the fields in which the Olympic Movement can bring an effective contribution to sustainable development. All the members of the Olympic Movement should be urged to integrate sustainable development into their policies and activities based on above Agenda 21; they should also encourage all individuals that are linked to them to behave in such a way as to ensure that their sporting activities and their lifestyles play a part in sustainable development.

1.2 WSSD

UNEP's Governing Council in its Decisions according to the Plan of Implementation and the Political Declaration set out in the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, promotes a long-term strategy for sport and the environment and *'encourages Governments to provide extra budgetary support to the United Nations Environment Program's work on sports and the environment...for supporting organizers of major sport events such as the Olympic Games to fully integrate environmental issues in their preparations and staging of the events'*.

2. Please briefly describe the essential characteristics of the case study you wish to share including the nature of activities undertaken.

The Athens Organising Committee for the Olympic Games ATHENS 2004 (ATHOC) and the Government bodies that are taking part in the Olympic preparations are to ensure that the organizing and hosting of the Games will be undertaken in the most environment-friendly and that the Olympic and Paralympic Games of 2004 can leave a significant environmental legacy for future generations; increased environmental awareness and concern regarding environmental issues as well as a cleaner and healthier natural environment.

To this end, the following projects have been implemented:

Unification of archaeological sites: An extensive program is being implemented for the creation of an archaeological park in the centre of Athens. Visitors to the city will be able to experience the Acropolis, the Agora, the Roman Forum and other unique monuments through a network of pedestrian zones, squares and parks that recapture the feel of the ancient city.

Faliron Coastal Zone Project: An ambitious land reclamation and rehabilitation program is being implemented, which will create 100 acres of land for urban recreational uses, including an ecological park of 33 acres and reconnect the urban space of Athens to the sea.

Schinias Rowing and Canoeing Centre: The area has been established as a National Park thus ensuring the management of an environmentally sensitive area and promoting the practice of low impact sport activities such as rowing in combination with recreation and environmental awareness. The Schinias Rowing and Canoeing Centre is not only a sporting venue but also a tool for the regeneration of the adjacent degraded wetland.

Transport Infrastructure: The public transport infrastructure is being enhanced and upgraded.

- over 210 km of ring roads and highways are being constructed or improved
- a new light rail, 25 km long, will connect the city centre to the coastal front
- a new suburban rail, now in its final stage of construction will span over 150 km
- two new metro lines are being extended, doubling the present capacity and serving up to a million passengers a day
- the original metro line is being renovated and its capacity increased

These works have an indirect impact on the improvement of the atmospheric quality of the greater Athens area, as they contribute to the promotion of more efficient, cleaner public transport thus eliminating the use of private cars.

Olympic Green areas: The goal is to ensure adequate implementation of good landscape architecture practices in Olympic competition and non-competition sites, the greater Athens area, and in other locations in Greece by respecting the original landscape and using natural resources rationally.

The Olympic Village meets in great extent the principles of sustainable development and bioclimatic architecture, which stresses the factors of correct orientation, good natural ventilation, interpenetration with park and garden areas, and circulation of natural air.

All green spaces will be designed and constructed so as to contain plants compatible with the Mediterranean climate and have minimum irrigation requirements. The economy of water will therefore be promoted. Recycling methods for the use of water and advanced river flow techniques will reinforce the rational use of water. With the contribution of donators and other stakeholders, for example Greeks from abroad, thematic gardens will be developed.

Public Green Procurement: The mission is the improvement of environmental performance of sponsors and licensees before, during, and after the Games. This generally involves improving the corporate image of sponsors and licensees, by considerably changing the usual Greek and international corporate approach regarding environmental issues, and educating the general public.

To achieve this, ATHOC assists in developing products or installations in compliance with acknowledged environmental certification systems (ISO, EMAS, ECO-LABEL); it funds and financially supports events and environmental activities as signature events; it submits tenders for sponsoring and licensing to address environmental considerations in relation to product manufacture, use, and disposal.

Environmental awareness raising and education: The overall purpose is to ensure that all the people involved in the Olympic Games are willing and able to include environmental considerations in their day-to-day activities. This principle applies to all participants in the planning, preparation, and holding of the Olympic Games (spectators, Olympic Family, athletes etc.).

Two raising awareness campaigns concerning water conservation and antilittering are planned. Venue-specific and sport-specific environmental information material is being developed for dissemination at Games-time.

3. Please explain the nature and characteristics of particular challenges and constraints faced, if any

Athens is a city with intense signs of environmental degradation, suffocation of urban planning and deficiencies in fundamental infrastructures. The centralization of administration in Athens, the bureaucracy and the mentality and behavioural patterns of citizens are also significant constraints that were taken into consideration in the implementation of the Environment Programme.

Furthermore, the inefficiency of the market to adjust in new practices, new products and technologies as well as the very strict national and European legislation for the design and development of works, change of land use, expropriations, permissions etc. were some of the confronting challenges.

4. What are the lessons learned in the process, positive and negative?

The Olympic Games comprise a tool and an opportunity for the environmental upgrade of the organizing city; a tool, because they can facilitate the implementation of rehabilitation interventions in crucial areas of the city, and an opportunity, because they can provide the background for expression, creativity and business growth for a considerable part of the society. Today, in the context of the Olympic Games preparations, major changes are being made, which will dramatically influence the quality of the environment (natural and built-up environment) in the Attica basin as well as the living standards of millions of people.

According to past Olympic Games experience of other cities, such as Sidney, this positive influence does not terminate after the completion of the Games. The most valuable lesson learned is that many of the initiatives, ideas and disputes are sometimes concluded even after the Games. This will probably be the case for the 2004 Olympic Games as well. Some wishful positive measures that cannot be implemented in time, could be intensified on the occasion of the Olympic Games and eventually be materialized directly afterwards, since a dynamic of such sort will have been formed.

5. What has been the impact of such a case in the area(s) concerned?

With regard to the conservation of water resources, the scheduled water conservation raising awareness campaign is an essential tool. The improvement in the areas of transportation and urban environment including landscaping are preconditions for sustainable human settlements.