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**Speech delivered by Ms Anita DeFrantz, International Olympic Committee
(not for distribution)**

Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) presents its compliments to the Commission on the Status of Women and appreciates this opportunity to participate in this vitally important effort to eliminate and prevent violence against women and girls. Violence against women and girls is endemic to nearly all societies, and it takes many forms, both physical and psychological. Violence is at the extreme end of a continuum that includes gender-based discrimination, taunts and sexual harassment. We cannot eradicate violence against women without eradicating the discriminatory attitudes that condone or even encourage it.

Sport and its values are valuable tools to address and improve self-esteem, body control, leadership and assertiveness - all being elements which can contribute to tackling violence.

The United Nations and other international institutions have acknowledged the power of sport as a tool for promoting gender equality. The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, recognises the role of sport in eliminating discrimination against women and girls.

Unfortunately, the world of sport is not immune to the problem that we are here to address, or to the behaviours that lead to gender-based violence. The IOC has been at the forefront of efforts to eliminate sexual harassment and sexual abuse in sport. Its commitment to this issue is fully aligned with the IOC's belief that the practice of sport is a human right that cannot be denied on the basis of gender, race or sexual orientation. The Olympic Charter states that "every individual must have the possibility of practising sport, without discrimination."

The IOC's Commission on Women and Sport, established in 1995, has long recognised that the threat of sexual harassment, abuse and violence against women and girls is as much of a deterrent to their participation in a sport as an outright ban. The IOC has sought to raise awareness of and find solutions for these issues at several global conferences and meetings, including the 2nd IOC World Conference on Women and Sport in 2000, the IOC Medical Commission's consensus meeting on "Sexual Harassment & Abuse in Sport" in 2006; and the Olympic Congress in Copenhagen in 2009.

The IOC has called on all sports organisations to develop policies and procedures to prevent sexual harassment and abuse; and to ensure that they are enforced. The IOC is also working to raise awareness among athletes and their families, and to empower them to act against perpetrators.

The new Youth Olympic Games, which combine sport with cultural and educational programmes, provide awareness-raising lessons on sexual harassment and abuse, as well as discussions about body image and eating disorders. Similar materials have been developed for adult athletes.

The IOC is not just working to eliminate harassment, abuse and violence in sport; it is working to eliminate these problems in society.

The Olympic Games have provided a global stage for women athletes to defy gender stereotypes since 1900. Women Olympians serve as powerful role models for young girls around the world, even girls who do not intend to pursue a career in sports. They prove that girls can overcome societal expectations and achieve their dreams in spite of the obstacles in their way. Some return from the Games as national heroes in countries that rarely celebrate the achievements of women.



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The 2012 London Games were a significant milestone toward the goal of gender equality. With the inclusion of women's boxing, women competed in every Olympic sport for the first time. More than 44 per cent of the competitors were women. With the inclusion of women on National Olympic Committee teams from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Brunei Darussalam, every National Olympic Committee has now sent women to the Games.

The IOC is also working to empower women and girls through sport at the grassroots level by supporting community-based programmes and efforts by National Olympic Committees to bring more women into leadership roles in sport.

Since gaining UN Observer status in 2009, the IOC has expanded and strengthened its partnerships with UN agencies and programmes, including projects that use sport to advance the Millennium Development Goal of gender equality. A project with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) targeted gender-based violence in Uganda with a sports programme for young men and women that encouraged team play and cooperation. It included training to discourage sexual and gender-based violence. Similar initiatives were undertaken in Panama, Venezuela and Kenya.

Madam Chair,

Sport has an important role to play in preventing violence against women and girls. It is not the only answer. There is no single solution to the pervasive problem of gender-based violence. Eliminating and preventing violence against women and girls will require deploying all available assets, including sport. It will require more cooperation and partnerships among individuals and organisations with a commitment to this cause. It will require assistance from governments and educational institutions.

While being mindful of the many challenges that women face to access sport and to eradicate gender-based violence in sport, the International Olympic Committee is committed to this effort and will continue to work within sport, and with partners outside sport, to promote the cause of gender equality and eliminate sexual harassment, abuse and violence. Together, we can make a difference and provide a brighter future for our daughters, granddaughters and generations to come.
