

“Final Report” by the Panel of Experts on
Strengthening Sport Diplomacy

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1. Introduction

(1) Background

It has been approximately one year since the decision to host the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo (hereinafter referred to as the “Tokyo Games”) was made. Currently, organisations and persons concerned in both public and private sectors are discussing and considering what they can do for the year 2020.

Last year marked the 50th anniversary of the Tokyo Olympic Games in 1964. Many International Olympic Committee (IOC) members and former athletes who participated in the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games visited Japan to attend the celebratory event held in October and shared their memories of the 1964 Olympic Games. The Olympic Games held 50 years ago gave Japan an opportunity to introduce Japan to the world, which was exactly in the period of rebuilding after the war and experiencing high economic growth. It was also an opportunity to make changes through large-scale infrastructure development and preparation of systems for accepting international guests. Fifty years later, what kind of a message should Japan transmit to the world in the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020? In light of Japan’s path as a peace-loving country, its consistent assistance to developing countries, and sincere efforts to various issues in the international arena, the Panel considers that on the occasion of year 2020, Japan should show the world how Japan can contribute to the world. That is, to say without fear of misunderstanding, how Japan can change the world.

From such a perspective, it is worth noting that Mr. Shinzo Abe, the Prime Minister, disclosed the “Sport for Tomorrow” programme, an international contribution plan of the Government of Japan through sports, in an IOC meeting in September 2013. In this programme, Prime Minister Abe committed to the expansion of values of sports and the Olympics/Paralympics movement to more than 10 million people in over 100 countries by 2020. It will be important to enhance international contribution in the field of sports by the year 2020 and beyond on the basis of steady implementation of this programme. It is time for the diplomatic authorities to enhance their efforts in this area in a full-fledged manner. Based on such a recognition, the “Panel of Experts on Strengthening Sport Diplomacy” established under Mr. Fumio Kishida, Minister for Foreign Affairs, has held a total of six meetings and special meetings from February last year. International sport figures and intellectuals were invited to present their opinions in addition to exchanges of opinions between panel members. In August last year, the Panel submitted policies and measures which should be quickly crystalized as an “Interim Report” to the Foreign Minister. This time, following completion of all the scheduled meetings, the Panel submits its final report.

(2) Sports and Diplomacy

First of all, as a basic idea for summarizing our proposals, the relationship between sports and diplomacy will be mentioned.

The relationship between sports and diplomacy may not be so apparent. As IOC declares its political neutrality, it is desired that politics and sports maintain their neutrality from each other. On the other hand, during the Cold War period, some countries boycotted the Olympics to make their political assertions or strengthened players to win medals from a viewpoint of boosting national prestige. Moreover, as the globalisation influences the sport world in recent years, good players become globally famous, and thanks to the development of transportation networks, it has become easier than ever to watch the games all over the world. As a result of such an environment, political leaders of each country cannot ignore the influence and power that sports have. Thus, sports and various activities surrounding sports reflect international relations. Furthermore, sport activities and operations of such activities have become one of the important elements that can influence international relations.

Such conditions lead to the following ideas concerning the relationship between diplomatic policies and sports. First, an idea of “Diplomacy by sport.” This means the utilization of influences or positive power of sport for diplomacy. From this perspective, an example must be noted that tennis players from India and Pakistan teamed up to play doubles and called for peace between the two countries. Moreover, sport is a popular field for everyone and anyone can join regardless of their gender or age. Therefore, it is also possible to conduct diplomacy from a new perspective by utilizing the advantage of sport as a useful means of public diplomacy and as a result to contribute to activation of Japanese society. Moreover, another viewpoint is “Diplomacy for sport,” which is an effort by diplomatic authorities for the development of sport while paying due respect to independence and autonomy of sport. This includes an effort to avoid negative influences of international political factors to sport activities (as in the above-mentioned Cold War period), and to thoroughly assure that games are held in a fair condition, in other words, “Diplomacy to protect sport.” It may be possible to consider the above as “Sport diplomacy” in a broad sense and to implement policies to a wide range of targets, from governments of other countries to citizens.

2. Proposals

Taking the contents of the above 1 into account, the Panel will suggest proposals according to the following three pillars in this Final Report on the basis of the Interim Report (it must be noted that the following categories are not exclusive and any policy and/or measure categorized in one pillar may be related to another pillar).

[First Pillar] Diplomacy by Sport

Sport can greatly impress and move people's hearts and improve quality of life through maintenance and improvement of health. In other words, sport is a public property and also a diplomatic resource. In the United Nations, a resolution concerning sport titled "Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace"¹ was adopted from a viewpoint of diplomacy and the importance of sport was recognized. In order to utilize this diplomatic resource and expand the range of diplomacy, it would be more important than ever for the diplomatic authorities to build a network with sport figures on occasions such as international sport competitions around the world and in Japan (e.g., hosting commemoration ceremonies or receptions at Japanese embassies). Moreover, it may also be possible to enhance the transmission of the Japan brand (e.g., culture, philosophy and specialty goods) by staging cultural events on such occasions to promote understanding of Japan. Furthermore, we will suggest various policies and measures from the following viewpoints:

(1) Response to development agenda through sport¹

Sport (or physical education in a broad sense) can directly or indirectly improve the welfare of an individual or group through contribution to improvement of athletic ability of the partner country. For example, there are sports that become a life skill such as swimming. Moreover, it is also possible to realize balanced growth of the body and mind of youth (prevention of juvenile delinquency and improvement of health of all generations) through sport. While the mainstream discussion on the roles of development assistance are to provide an "opportunity" for growth/improvement of developing countries, sport can become a useful tool because sports have a high affinity with catalyst functions of such development. Moreover, focusing on the competitiveness of sport, when an international athlete emerges, the image of that country can be improved and, as a result, the international reputation of that country also improves. Therefore, it is also useful to provide support from such a viewpoint. Specifically, the Panel suggests following proposals.

(A) To effectively utilize existing schemes of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (e.g., JICA volunteers and cooperation with Cultural Grant Assistance, etc.) to provide support for human resource raising and assistance for athletic facilities and equipment. Moreover, concerning provision of equipment, consideration will be given to indirect assistance such as providing cooperation for smoothing procedures when sport organizations are willing to provide facilities

¹ United Nations Resolution in the 69th Session A/RES/69/6 "Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace" (Adopted with no contest on October 31, 2014)

to developing countries.

(B) In order to promote the participation of developing countries in international competitions or hosting of athletic competitions in such countries, coaches and athletes are sent from Japan to such countries and these people are also invited from such countries to Japan.

(C) To transmit the experience and know-how of Japan through educational activities at schools, holding seminars and exchanging information at the administrative level (assistance for setting up sports-related policies, etc.), and at the same time to provide assistance mainly to the youth of other countries. Specifically, to provide assistance for the introduction of athletic education at schools including cooperation for setting up curriculum.

(D) To support nutritional enhancement and physical preparation for the empowerment of both individuals and groups by use of sport.

(2) Promotion of peace and mutual understanding through sport

Sports enable people to respect their opponent and to increase the spirit of mutual understanding by competing in accordance with fair rules and by sharing the same experience. Therefore, the power of sport can be utilized as a catalyst for revitalizing the community or the consolidation of peace in a region following a dispute or a region struck by a disaster. Moreover, it may also be possible to contribute to confidence building between confronting countries or groups through sport activities. Thus, it must be noted that sport can produce peace. It is desired that Japan will make a contribution to lead the power of sport to peace building and the Panel suggests the following specific efforts.

(A) Promotion of international exchanges utilizing sport for confidence building: Hosting seminars and events, dispatching/invitation of sport coaches and players (including youth) for exchanges (a scheme of the Japan Foundation will also be utilized). Particularly, sport figures and youth are invited from regions in a conflict or post-conflict regions in order to provide them with opportunities for mutual understanding and joint activity. This will also become an opportunity for the Japanese public to change their images about such disputed regions.

(B) In order to implement the above (A), to discuss the “Third country project” which aims at coordinating not only with a counterpart country but also with a third country to jointly carry out cooperation.

(C) To enhance cooperation for the formation of a national team or promotion of a certain sport (including a traditional sport) in a case where the national team or the sports serves as a symbol of national unification or social integration following a conflict. Moreover, for the protection and promotion of the traditional sport of each country, which are not necessarily internationalized, international cooperation should be carried out in coordination with international organizations and NGOs/NPOs.

(3) Promotion of participation in society through sport

Moreover, it is conceivable that the participation of people, who are positioned as socially vulnerable persons, in society can be promoted more by using the power of sport. It is necessary to focus on the role of sport when considering the issues of how to promote participation in society by such people and how to empower such individuals. In this regard, the Panel suggests the following measures.

(A) To implement the dispatch of coaches and players to developing countries/training of coaches and players in Japan for the purpose of the promotion of para-sport (e.g., improvement of competitiveness and sharing know-how for hosting an international competition) in other countries, including developing countries.

(B) In connection with the above (A), to develop equipment for para-sport by utilizing the science and technologies of Japanese enterprises. The Government should support the spread of such equipment to the world.

(C) To carry out promotion of senior sport and educational activities on the extension of a healthy life to other countries and spread Japan's good practice. From such a perspective, policies and measures to utilize the power of active Japanese seniors for a contribution to international friendship (e.g., expansion of senior overseas volunteers) should be proceeded further.

(D) To provide assistance for the coaching of sport by women and raising female coaches in a country where women's empowerment is necessary. In addition, the dispatch of personnel and provision of equipment for this purpose should be carried out.

[Second Pillar] Diplomacy for Sport

The second pillar is closely related to the first pillar. Diplomatic authorities should make efforts to support development of the sport world and to support sport figures of Japan so that they can play to the full extent, including the promotion of international anti-doping activities and prevention of fixing/illegal actions. The following proposals are suggested from such a perspective.

(1) Contribution to sport on diplomatic opportunities

(A) To activate exchanges on the occasions of visits by leaders and high-ranking officials of the government: To promote sport diplomacy within the context of bilateral/multilateral relations when the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, or other government officials visit other countries. Particularly, from a perspective of gaining the recognition of para-sport, such as the Paralympics, the Deaflympics and the Special Olympics, diplomatic authorities should provide as much assistance as possible through utilization of such high-ranking government officials'

visits and Japanese embassies abroad.

(B) To contribute to preparation of environment for peacefully playing sports through efforts for the “Olympic truce.”

(2) Contribution to internationalization of Japanese sport society

(A) To encourage development of the sport society of Japan, support for sending Japanese as staff or director-level officers to international sport organizations and sport organizations of Asia.

(B) To support the promotion of sharing international information among sport organizations and expansion of international departments of such organizations (e.g., to provide an opportunity to exchange information between such organizations and MOFA upon their request).

(C) To obtain cooperation from sport figures including Japanese athletes after their retirement for the above-mentioned activities for international contribution related to “Diplomacy by sport” so that the sport figures will play active roles in an international arena.

[Third Pillar] Establishment of a Foundation for Promotion of Sport Diplomacy

Finally, in order to effectively promote sport diplomacy, educational activities to inside and outside of Japan, establishing a good cooperation system between relevant persons inside and outside of Japan, and development of a domestic system that prompts athletes and sport figures to join activities for international contribution (including life security for athletes and sport figures) are also very important. Particularly, the Panel considers that following issues which are directly related to international activities should be immediately considered and discussed by the government.

(1) To build cooperative relations with various “players”: When implementing the above-mentioned policies and measures, cooperate with each sport organization, economic organizations/private enterprises, and NGO/NPO and emphasize collaboration with the field of culture and art.

(2) To try to strengthen bilateral relations with countries that have hosted/will host the Olympic/Paralympic Games through sharing of knowledge and utilize such knowledge and relations in the preparation of the 2020 Tokyo Games.

(3) To appoint a sport ambassador, to establish a system for the promotion of sport diplomacy in MOFA, and to enhance coordination with relevant organizations.

3. Conclusion

The 2020 Tokyo Games should contribute to the development of local areas as well as that of Tokyo. Moreover, there are many issues that Japan should tackle with in order to make the Tokyo Games the one that not only Japan but each and every country of the world looks forward to. In addition, Japan should work to leave legacies that will be inherited after the year 2020. Implementation of policies and measures for strengthening of sport diplomacy is part of such efforts and the Panel considers that it is essential to implement such policies and measures.

From a perspective of implementing “Sport for Tomorrow”, an international contribution plan of Japan, the “Sport for Tomorrow Consortium” was established last August by relevant organizations such as MOFA, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology, the Japan Sport Council, the Japanese Olympic Committee, and the Japanese Para-Sport Association/Japanese Paralympic Committee. The Consortium, through holding discussions regularly, aims to promote coordination and cooperation between each organization in their exchanges of knowledge concerning international contribution to sport and construction of an information network and database. In addition to the role of the Consortium, it will be important to carry out various new policies and measures in the future such as periodically holding opportunities to obtain opinions from intellectuals related to sports. In such a case, it will also be important to plan or support an international symposium on sports and diplomacy such as development agenda or peace building and sports based on the coordination between the sport society and also universities for the purpose of promoting discussions from international perspectives.

The Panel wishes that the 2020 Tokyo Games will change the world and sport diplomacy will open a new possibility of Japan’s diplomacy.

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