

Mr. Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Mr Orvais Sarmad),

Excellences,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Chair of the Sustainability and Legacy Commission of the International Olympic Committee, I am honored to represent the IOC, its President and the Olympic Movement for the launch of the “Sports for Climate Action Initiative”.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the United Nations Climate Change secretariat for this initiative, taking place at a crucial time for our planet.

World leaders have gathered here in Katowice to take stock of their progress towards meeting what is possibly the most urgent deadline we have ever faced – the finalisation of the Paris Agreement.

The timing of this launch, therefore, could not be more pertinent. Its role in ensuring a successful outcome cannot be overstated.

The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change sends a clear warning that we are on the brink of an environmental catastrophe due to climate change.

But it also concludes that we would be in a situation to avoid it, should the global warming be limited to 1.5 degrees.

However, it will not be an easy task. Achieving this goal will require unprecedented global action and firm commitment from everyone, every government, every sector of our societies and each and every one of us.

The world of sport can play a unique role and contribute to this global effort.

With its global reach, universal appeal and the power to inspire and influence millions of people around the globe, sport is uniquely placed to be actively engaged in climate action and encourage a great number of individuals and organizations to join in.

More than an opportunity for sport to leverage its power, addressing climate change is not just a responsibility, it is an obligation – and a challenge that we simply cannot afford to lose.

Like every sector and so many human activities around the world, sport has already been heavily impacted by climate change. The consequences are wide-ranging: rising temperatures are putting athletes’ health at risk, lack of snow threatens the survival of winter resorts and extreme weather affects sporting performances.

As a number of human activities, sport is also a net contributor to greenhouse gas emissions through its various operations: from travel and construction, event management, energy use and to all forms of consumption.

Minimising this impact and actively addressing the challenge of climate change are the duty and responsibility of every sports organisation, every athlete, every official and every spectator.

At the International Olympic Committee, we deal with this responsibility with extreme attention.

When the United Nations launched its ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and as countries under the UN Climate Change Convention agreed on the landmark Paris Agreement, we at the IOC were addressing the recommendations of “Olympic Agenda 2020” – the strategic roadmap for the future of the Olympic Movement.

Sustainability is one of the three pillars of “Olympic Agenda 2020” – alongside credibility and youth – which makes it an integral element of the Olympic Movement, and a pre-requisite for its survival.

“Olympic Agenda 2020” specifically recommends that the IOC includes sustainability in all aspects of the Olympic Games and in its own actions.

It also recommends that the IOC supports the Olympic Movement stakeholders – including International Sports Federations whose disciplines are featured on the Olympic programme, National Olympic Committees and the Organising Committees for the Olympic Games – to incorporate sustainability into their daily operations.

Climate change is a cross-cutting theme and one of the five focus areas of the IOC Sustainability Strategy, which we published in January 2017, and our climate-related objectives are closely aligned with the Paris Agreement.

One of the 2030 strategic intents of the IOC calls for effective carbon-reduction strategies for operations and events, in line with the objectives of the Paris Agreement the world is finalising here in Katowice.

The IOC fully recognises its responsibility to address the global challenge of climate change, across its three areas of responsibility: as an organisation, as the owner of the Olympic Games and as the leader of the Olympic Movement.

Perhaps most importantly – the IOC places collaboration at the centre of these efforts, fully acknowledging that no individual or organization can tackle the challenge alone.

This is precisely why today we are offering our full support and leadership to the newly-launched Sports for Climate Action Initiative.

This Initiative will provide the sports world with the support it needs to help the global community win the race against climate change.

It will help mainstream climate action within the sporting world and set a clear direction towards tackling climate change through ambitious commitments, creative partnerships and robust measurement and reporting.

It will provide sports organisations with the much-needed forum to implement climate mitigation actions in a consistent and mutually supportive fashion.

In a real collaborative spirit – so true to the Olympic values – this Initiative will allow us to learn from each other, share good practices and lessons learned, and develop new tools and innovative ideas.

The IOC is proud to have taken a leadership role in this Initiative.

As the world’s leaders present in Katowice prepare to turn their climate commitments into action, we stand ready to leverage the power of sport to fully support their efforts.

The IOC looks forward to working with all of you towards our common goal of building, for future generations, a better world through sport.

Thank you.