



# FACTSHEET

## Olympic Truce

16 November 2021

### Mission

*“The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.”* ([Olympic Charter, Fundamental Principle 2](#)).

In this third millennium, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) is more convinced than ever of the positive role that sport can, and must, play as a catalyst in our society. It unites us and teaches us about respect and tolerance, two values that are essential in today's world.

### The Sacred Truce in Antiquity

The tradition of the “Olympic Truce”, or “Ekecheiria”, was established in Ancient Greece in the ninth century BC through the signing of a treaty between three kings: Iphitos of Elis, Cleosthenes of Pisa and Lycurgus of Sparta.

Subsequently, all the other Greek cities ratified this “international agreement”, thanks to which permanent, recognised immunity of the sanctuary of Olympia and the region of Elis became a reality. During the Truce period, athletes, artists and their families, as well as ordinary pilgrims, could travel in total safety to participate in or attend the Olympic Games and return afterwards to their respective countries. As the opening of the Games approached, the sacred truce was proclaimed and announced by the Spondophoroi, citizens of Elis who travelled throughout Greece to pass on the message. Proof that this Truce was respected is that, in Olympia, the Greeks never built walls to protect themselves, unlike all the other Greek cities.

### The Symbol

The Olympic Truce is symbolised by the dove of peace, with the traditional Olympic flame in the

background. In a world plagued by wars and animosity, the peace-dove symbol represents one of the IOC's ideals and challenges: to build a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal. The Olympic flame has brought warm friendship to all the people of the world through sharing and togetherness. In the symbol, the flame is made up of colourful effervescent elements – evoking the joy experienced in the celebration of the human spirit. These elements represent people of all races coming together to observe the Truce.

### The Reintroduction of the Olympic Truce into the Modern Games

Taking into account the new political reality in which sport and the Olympic Games exist, the IOC decided to revive the concept of the Olympic Truce for the Olympic Games, with a view to protecting, as far as possible, the interests of the athletes and sport in general, and to contribute to the search for peaceful and diplomatic solutions to the world's conflicts. The first Olympic Truce project was launched in 1991, following the break-up of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the creation of the United Nations (UN) Security Council Sanctions Committee against this country, as a result of which, in 1992, its Resolution 757 included “sport” as a sanctioned element for the first time. After several consultations, the IOC, as a centennial institution, opted to reaffirm its independence, defend the athletes' interests, protect the Olympic Games and consolidate the unity of the Olympic Movement.

On the advice of the IOC Executive Board, on 21 July 1992 the 99<sup>th</sup> IOC Session called on all states, as well as all international and national organisations, to let Yugoslavian athletes compete, and asked the IOC President to start talks with the UN.



Finally, the UN Security Council Sanctions Committee and the IOC reached an agreement, enabling the Yugoslav athletes to take part as individuals in the Games of the XXV Olympiad in 1992 in Barcelona.

## More than 25 Years of United Nations Support

Since 1993, the UN General Assembly has repeatedly expressed its support for the IOC by adopting by consensus, every two years – a year before each edition of the Olympic Games – a resolution entitled “Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal”. Through this (symbolic) resolution, the UN invites its Member States to observe the Olympic Truce individually or collectively, and to seek, in conformity with the goals and principles of the United Nations Charter, the peaceful settling of all international conflicts through peaceful and diplomatic means, recognising the importance of the IOC’s initiatives for human well-being and international understanding.

On 9 December 2019, the Session of the United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution for observance of the Olympic Truce for the Games of the XXXII Olympiad in [Tokyo](#) in 2021 (see the [text of the resolution](#)).

It has also become a tradition for the UN, through its Secretary-General and the President of its General Assembly, to call upon its Member States to observe the traditional Olympic Truce during the Olympic Games.

## The Olympic Truce during the Olympic Games

In line with the Fundamental Principles of the Olympic Charter, the Organising Committees for the Olympic Games are requested to carry out various activities in the period **leading up to** and **during** the Games, aiming to:

- promote peace, human understanding and community-building through sport; and
- promote the concept of the Olympic Truce.

At Sydney 2000, a soldier from the Timor-Leste peacekeeping force and a UN volunteer took part in the Olympic Torch Relay. And at the Opening Ceremony, the South and North Korean delegations

paraded together under the flag of the Korean peninsula.

It has also become custom for athletes – and officials from the broader Olympic Movement – to sign an Olympic Truce Mural located in the Olympic Village to show their support for peace-building through sport.

During each Games, the Olympic Truce Mural offers a unique opportunity for athletes from around the world to show their support for the values of peace, respect, solidarity, inclusion and equality.

Organising Committees have continued to be innovative in the way they apply the Olympic Truce concept.

At Vancouver 2010, the idea of having the Head of State as Patron of the Olympic Truce at the Olympic Games gave the concept its highest profile since it was reinstated in 1992. The Governor General of Canada, Michaëlle Jean, was a perfect symbol of the Olympic Truce, as she represented the diversity and richness of Canada’s culture, population and languages, and, most of all, tolerance.

At London 2012, the Organising Committee (LOCOG) raised the bar in delivering Olympic Truce activities, inviting everyone to play their part. Through its educational programme “Get set for the Olympic Truce”, LOCOG was able to involve 85 per cent of schools and colleges across the country. In addition, LOCOG launched a strand of its Inspire Programme, which allowed projects using sport or culture to promote peace and conflict resolution to be linked to and recognised by the London 2012 Games.

At Sochi 2014, the Olympic Truce was an important and consistent part of the Games education and culture programme. The Russian International Olympic University (RIOU), which opened its doors to students from across the world, was a symbolic example of the Olympic Truce ideals.

At Rio 2016, a challenge was launched across schools to promote the concept of the Olympic Truce. Each student was invited to create their own peace flag, and these were then combined to create a mosaic flag displayed in the main tourist spots and Olympic venues.



At PyeongChang 2018, the peace dimension was of great significance, with the city located close to the peninsula's Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) dividing line. Achieving "Peace Olympics" was a core value of PyeongChang 2018, and to do this, the Organising Committee was at the forefront of promoting and spreading peace by implementing the Olympic Truce programme, through comprehensive education and engagement activities leading up to the Games. The two Koreas marching jointly at the Opening Ceremony and the participation of a unified Korean women's ice hockey team, in particular, sent a powerful message of peace to the entire globe.

At Tokyo 2020, the Organising Committee promoted the ideal of the Olympic Truce, in particular through a project called "Peace Orizuru", inviting residents and visitors to make origami cranes. Origami cranes have long been considered a symbol of peace in Japan, and activities inviting the population to fold cranes together in the name of peace were held all over the country. In addition, the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Truce Mural concept was "Frame of Peace", recognising diversity, connecting people together and bringing harmony.

In 2016, the United Nations Postal Administration (UNPA), in partnership with the IOC, launched a series of six stamps depicting sports events and a dove of peace, to commemorate the shared values of the two organisations, in particular the concept of sport at the service of peace.

## **The International Olympic Truce Centre**

In the framework of promoting peace through sport and the Olympic ideal, the International Olympic Truce Centre (IOTC) was founded in July 2000 as part of a joint initiative by Greece and the IOC. Its headquarters are in Athens, with a symbolic office in Olympia.

The IOTC defines its actions around the following objectives:

- To promote the Olympic ideals to serve peace, friendship and understanding in the world, and in particular, to promote the ancient Greek tradition of the Olympic Truce;
- To initiate conflict prevention and resolution through sport, culture and the Olympic ideals, and

promote peace in general by mobilising young people worldwide;

- To cooperate with all inter- and non-governmental organisations specialised in this field, to develop educational and research programmes, and to launch communications campaigns, meetings and conferences to promote the Olympic Truce.

The IOTC is administered by a Board composed of personalities from the world of sport and politics, and meets once a year (chaired by the IOC).

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