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CIPRA Press Release on the Winter Olympics

Our demand: Olympics-free Alps!

After the celebrations, the hangover of the morning after the Olympics: the reckoning of the consequential damage and the follow-up costs in Sochi. And just as it has been for all the venues around the world that have hosted the Winter Olympics, the reckoning will be severe. In an open letter, CIPRA is calling on IOC President Thomas Bach to initiate a fundamental reform of the IOC. In fact CIPRA has upped the ante with a policy document demanding that no more Winter Olympics be planned or staged in their current form.

The 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi are history. However, the epilogue has yet to be written. Major infrastructure facilities and environmental degradation are set to make a “sustainable” impression on the region around Sochi. For the population and for nature itself, the Games will not be sustainable. As with the other venues that have hosted the Winter Olympics in the past, whether in the Alps or elsewhere, the repercussions will remain visible and palpable for decades to come.

CIPRA President Dominik Siegrist is demanding that the IOC abide by the rules of the game that apply to any international organisation – compliance and sustainability.

In his opening speech in Sochi and in interviews, IOC President Thomas Bach called for the Games to be “depoliticised”. He said that politicians should “not play out their conflicts on the backs of sportsmen and women”. But clearly he found it acceptable for Russia to broadcast its power propaganda to the world on the shoulders of the athletes – while completely disregarding the fundamental principles of the rule of law and human rights, with the arbitrary arrests of environmentalists.

“Olympics-free Alps” – a united front

CIPRA, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps, is an umbrella organisation that represents more than 100 organisations and institutions in the Alps. In a resolution it is demanding that Winter Olympics no longer be planned and staged in their current form, either in the Alps or elsewhere. The experiences of the past decades have shown that mountain regions are not suitable for this environmentally destructive and ruinous major event. Referenda in Graubünden and Munich show that large sections of the population are increasingly unwilling to accept the burden of the Winter Olympics. The Alps

should remain Olympics-free, just as they have been in the last eight years and will be in the decade ahead.

IOC reorientation is essential

In an open letter, CIPRA is calling on IOC President Thomas Bach to initiate a fundamental reform of the IOC as well as the rules and regulations governing the planning and staging of the Winter Olympics. Such a reform should include a return to a scale commensurate with the hosting venues and a transparent selection process based on what the officials demand of all the athletes – that they abide by the rules of the game. The Winter Olympics must once again become Youth Olympics and a symbol of peace and freedom. They must be planned and staged transparently, and in a way that is both socially and environmentally compatible. Thomas Bach will have to allow himself to be measured against how well he copes with the challenge of reforming the IOC.

The open letter to Thomas Bach, the policy document Olympics-free Alps! and more detailed information can be found at www.cipra.org/en/olympics.

This release and the joint position paper of the eight organisations are available for download at: www.cipra.org/en/press/press-releases.

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CIPRA, a diverse and versatile organisation

CIPRA, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps, is a non-governmental umbrella organisation with national offices in all seven Alpine countries, representing more than 100 associations and organisations. CIPRA works towards achieving sustainable development in the Alps; it also strives to preserve the natural and cultural heritage, maintain regional diversity, and bring about solutions to cross-border problems in the Alpine region.

www.cipra.org