

ATLANTA - BEIJING+

“All forms of discrimination with respect to any country or a person whether for reasons of race, religion, politics, sex or any other, are incompatible with the Olympic Movement.” (Olympic Charter)

Background paper for the press conference to be held in Geneva on Thursday July 24, 2008

1. The Committee Atlanta+, now become Atlanta-Beijing+, is a French human rights group, deeply concerned with the values of universalism displayed in the Olympic Charter which specifies that **any form of discrimination, including gender discrimination, is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement.**
2. Members of the leading team of Atlanta-Beijing+:
 - **Annie Sugier**, (France), Co-founder and President, also President of the “Ligue du Droit International des Femmes” created by Simone de Beauvoir;
 - **Anne-Marie Lizin** (Belgium), Co-founder and Honorary President of the Belgium Senate;
 - **Linda Weil-Curiel** (France), lawyer, Co-founder and member of the Paris Bar;
 - **Chahla Chafiq** (Iran), sociologist and writer;
 - **Makis Chamalidis** (Greece), Doctor in psychology of sports and writer.
3. Atlanta-Beijing + was founded after the Barcelona Olympics (1992), when the South African National Committee was back after having been excluded for over 30 years and the grounds of the Olympic Charter because of its apartheid policy. Our demand was for the Olympic Charter to be also implemented in the case of the exclusion of women because of cultural traditions and religious principles. Since then Atlanta-Beijing + also pointed out N.O.Cs sending veiled athletes and organising separate Games for women without the presence of men and of the media.
4. One should never forget what a struggle it was for women to be allowed to participate in the Olympics. Women were completely barred from the renewed Olympics in Athens in 1896. However, a young Greek female athlete, Melpomene, who was denied the right to compete, ran the 40 km race from Marathon to Athens on her own and was acclaimed by the public. At the Paris Games (1900) 12 women did participate in three side-events (golf, tennis, and yachting). At the Amsterdam Games (1920), the baron de Coubertin refused to include women in field and track competitions. Meanwhile, a French sportswoman, Alice Milliat, organized three field and track Feminine World

Games (Montecarlo, Paris and Göteborg) to show women's will and ability to compete in athletics. Over 300 women from 5 countries competed. The result was that women's abilities were recognized by the International Federation of Athletism and, finally, at the Amsterdam Games (1928) the participation of women was officially accepted by the IOC.

5. The overall percentage of women competitors in the Olympics is increasing continuously:

- 2704 women representing 29% of the athletes in Barcelona (1992)
- 3512 women representing 34% of the athletes in Atlanta (1996)
- 4069 women representing 38% of the athletes in Sydney (2000)
- 4329 women representing 41% of the athletes in Athens (2004)

6. However the following situations are challenged by Atlanta-Beijing + as unacceptable:

N.O.Cs delegations without women

- 35 delegations without women in Barcelona (1992)
- 26 delegations without women in Atlanta (1996)
- 9 delegations without women in Sydney (2000)
- 9 delegations without women in Athens (2004).

The 9 N.O.Cs in Athens were mainly from Islamic countries *i.e.* Brunei, UEA, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, three other N.O.Cs had the very smallest delegations (*British Virgin Islands, Liechtenstein, Netherlands Antilles*).

N.O.Cs sending female athletes wearing religious signs on the Olympic sites

In Athens, several National Olympic Committees, among which Iran and Egypt, had women athletes participating in the Games or at the official ceremonies wearing Islamic headscarves or even complete Islamic covering outfits.

N.O.Cs organizing and participating in Separate Games for women

These so-called "Islamic Solidarity Games" are organized every 4 years by Iran. Media and men are not allowed in, therefore these Games institutionalize segregation of women in sports. By supporting such games, the IOC betrays the spirit and values of the Olympic Charter.

7. The Atlanta-Beijing+ views were supported by the United Nations Human Rights Commission, the Council of Europe and the European Parliament very clear resolutions on the full participation of women in the Olympics (references of the resolutions : Commission of Human Right 1996/45 ; Council of Europe 1092/1996; European Parliament 34-0862/96).

8. Sports have always played a central part in the fights for human rights:

- Jesse Owens in Berlin (1936)
- the Hungary and USSR in Melbourne (1956)
- Smith and Carlos in Mexico (1968)
- Hassiba Boulmerka in Barcelona (1992)

The Olympic Stadium is a unique place where only one law is implemented, based on universal values: the Olympic Charter.

9. Atlanta-Beijing+ denounces the double language of an IOC president who allows women from Iran and Egypt to wear religious signs while he forbids the French athletes to wear a badge with the word “for a better world”, a quotation from the Olympic Charter, explaining that the Charter forbids any expression of political or religious signs.

Why does not the IOC dare to apply its own Charter as far as discrimination of women athletes and sexual segregation is concerned?

ATLANTA - BEIJING +
6, Place Saint-Germain-des-Prés 75006 Paris - France
TEL : (33) 1.45.49.04.00 - FAX : (33) 1.45.49.16.71
Email : w113111@club-internet.fr