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UIPM SECRETARY GENERAL'S MESSAGE: A REMARKABLE AND UNIQUE OLYMPIC CYCLE (2017 - 2021)



Hope and despair, happiness and sadness, peace and panic, emergencies and new normal...

The Tokyo 2020 Olympic cycle was highly eventful – in fact the whole globe has gone through extraordinary and unbelievable experiences in recent times. We had to embrace new ways of life and adapt.

At UIPM, which has governed the core Olympic sport of Modern Pentathlon since 1948 and developed another six multi-discipline sports in recent years, we have learned the hard way to turn threats to opportunities, turn disadvantages to our advantage and turn negatives into positives.

As Secretary General I have a deep well of pride in the work of the whole UIPM staff team that I am very fortunate to lead, working under the guidance of the UIPM President, Treasurer and Executive Board, together with the unsung heroes who sit on committees, commissions and working groups and our incredible, dedicated and tireless organisers. Not to mention the most important group – our athletes – without whom we wouldn't have a sport. We are here for you!

During this cycle we achieved a long list of firsts.

We created the Pentathlon Stadium concept, launched in Mexico City (MEX) for the UIPM 2018 Pentathlon World Championships and introduced to the Olympic Games in Tokyo (JPN) in 2021.

We collaborated with FISU on the 1st World University Championships for Modern Pentathlon in 2018, while UIPM Sports also joined the programme of the World Urban Games, Central Caribbean Games and South East Asian Games in 2019, and as well as the Junior Pan American Games in 2021. In 2023 Modern Pentathlon will feature in the European Games for the first time.

Internally we launched the Global Laser Run City Tour (GLRCT) in 2017 and the Biathle-Triathle National Tour (BTNT) a year later, with the first combined UIPM Pentathlon & Laser Run World Championships following in 2019 (and repeated in 2021).

Now an annual staple, Pierre de Coubertin Pentathlon Day was introduced in Mexico with a successful #High5 promotional campaign and National Federation (NF) participation toolkit. Similar resources were provided to NFs to support their development and event applications.

UIPM held and streamed its first Gala Awards in Cyprus during the 2018 Congress, which was repeated in 2019 featuring the first UIPM Awards public voting platform. In November 2021, UIPM's first virtual Congress will be streamed live too! There was another mark of prestige with the launch of an official UIPM postage stamp in cooperation with the Monaco Government.

In an increasingly online world, we launched the UIPM Central app in 2018 and updated it in 2019 and 2020, providing live results of all UIPM events – and the UIPM Shop was launched in 2017 on the web with athlete ambassadors signing up in 2019. Information has also been provided via UIPM microsites for confederations, elections and anti-doping that went live in 2019 and 2020.

Educational support for our coaches, judges launched in 2019 and athletes will be enhanced soon with a full online platform packed with e-learning courses. Since 2019 we have offered scholarships for athletes' advanced education in partnership with various universities.

On the promotional side, we launched two shows – UIPM Live Talks and Pentathlon 360 – which were popular especially in the Olympic year of 2021. At the height of the pandemic, our global community gathered online for the innovative Laser Home Run and Laser All Stars virtual competitions. The UIPMTV online platform enjoyed more than 100% growth in numbers and subscriptions in 2021.

Speaking of results, I am so proud of some of the achievements of this cycle that we can chart in numbers.

We enjoyed a high score and category improvement in the ASOIF governance evaluation for International Federations in two continuous years (2019 to 2021) and welcomed 20 new National Federations.

We reached 240 cities through the UIPM Global Laser Run City Tour – a true gem of global urban sports development.

The new Modern Pentathlon competition format – approved by the IOC Executive Board for Paris 2024 – was rigorously tested four times in spite of the obstacles presented by the pandemic, which also created a complex challenge for Tokyo 2020 qualification. All competitions on the road to Tokyo were successfully arranged, along with three Youth Olympic Games New Tetrathlon format tests for Dakar 2026.

From the new UIPM Headquarters, opened by HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco in 2020, the UIPM team worked internationally with partners to achieve a truly global TV reach for Modern Pentathlon, with a big increase in broadcasted hours for our major competitions and improved graphics.

Online we enjoyed a 43% increase in website traffic, a 38% increase in newsletter open rates and exciting growth in the highly competitive social media marketplace – 35% audience growth on Facebook and 238% on Instagram across the cycle, and 12% on Twitter in 2021 alone. Our Weibo audience grew by more than 1000% from 2017 to 2021.

Storytelling is now embedded in our communications approach and I loved the incredible promotional campaigns we created for Tokyo 2020 with athletes at the centre.

To professionalise, standardise and streamline our operations we created new sets of guidelines and regulations across 18 different areas, covering everything from branding, uniforms to COVID-19 infection prevention, and to athletes safeguarding policy.

But let's face it – this Olympic cycle was about surviving as well as thriving. We controlled a limited budget based on the impact of the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, thanks in part to incredible support from the Monaco government via CTTR subsidies, which helped UIPM to retain a full staff complement without any redundancies.

Everything I have covered in this foreword was built on crucial and irreplaceable teamwork with the many volunteers and professional colleagues whose expertise underpins our movement.

So what comes next?

We have a number of exciting projects in the pipeline, including our first e-sport and progressive initiatives across para-sport and sustainability.

Our targets for 2022-2024 are centred around the Paris 2024 Olympic Games with a firm focus also on Dakar 2026 (the first Youth Olympic Games in Africa) and Los Angeles 2028.

By 2024 we aim to have 150 National Federations, a consistent and attractive TV product, even higher governance standards and more hands-on staff support for each UIPM Confederation, and to enhance communications among all stakeholders and especially with all athletes to provide more potential service.

On reflection, perhaps we would not have opted for such an eventful Tokyo 2020 cycle, had we been given a choice. But just look at everything we achieved by working hard together through good and hard times – and I'm excited to see what we can achieve as a strong community inspired by faith, passion, creativity, support and collaboration.