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UIPM SECRETARY GENERAL'S MESSAGE: HERITAGE & INNOVATION – THE BALANCE THE IOC IS LOOKING FOR



During the recent IOC Session and Winter Olympic Games in Milano-Cortina, a lot of conversations among Olympic sport leaders centred around **heritage and innovation**.

For a sport aiming to demonstrate its value to the movement and continuous relevance, which one is the key priority? In the case of UIPM, the answer is simple. **The answer is both**. And this has been the case for a long time ...

1. The Blind Spot

- When there are debates of “heritage versus future”, Pentathlon is the sport that sits comfortably in both, bridging the gap between eras.
- Perceptions can often linger in the past, and we understand that some still see the old version of our sport and are unaware of its transformation.
- Our job is make the invisible visible, and promote the innovation until everyone knows about it.

2. Heritage: A True Original

- Modern Pentathlon was **founded by Baron Pierre de Coubertin**, father of the modern Olympics.
- Pentathlon is not a “guest” sport. It is part of the Olympic DNA with more than a century of unbroken Games history.
- The philosophy of the “complete athlete” – mind, body, adaptability – was written into stone by Coubertin, and we carry his legacy.
- We don’t borrow tradition. **We are the tradition.**

3. Innovation: The Hard Yards



- When change was demanded, we didn’t resist. We delivered.
- Obstacle racing was selected as the new fifth discipline, embracing the world’s fastest-growing urban sport.
- This instantly opened the door to millions of new athletes (OCR, Ninja Warrior TV shows, fitness culture).
- Venue transformation: a new age of flexibility for organisers, with city-centre activations and iconic backdrops.
- TV-friendly finals: Obstacle + Laser Run = drama, speed, elimination, youth appeal.
- Gender equality. Cost efficiency. Adaptability. **This is exactly what the IOC asks for.**

4. The Gap: Awareness, Not Performance

- The problem is in the **visibility of our evolution.**
- Some still associate us with a 20th-century logistical medal: heavy input for limited output.

- They do not know:
 - That Obstacle brings **millions of new participants and fans**.
 - That our finals are now **primetime ready**.
 - That we are **already delivering** the “future Games” format today.
- We have not been loud enough about our change. That ends now.

5. The Signature: “Heritage & Innovation”

- This exact phrase has been sent in our email signatures for **10 years**.
- It was never a slogan. It was the **keywords of a strategy**.
- We have lived this **balance** longer than it has been trendy.
- Now it’s time to promote it **from footnote to headline**.

6. The Ask: Not Favour, Just Focus

- We do not ask for sympathetic treatment. We ask for **awareness**.
- We are not a sport that needs to be saved. We are a sport that has already saved itself – while **keeping its soul**.
- If the IOC wants heritage and innovation in one package, stop searching, **we are right here**.