

# **Report on the Olympic Truce – London 2012**

*published by the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office, September 2013*

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## **Commentary by United Nations Association Westminster Branch**

**1 Late Submission** We thank the Committee on Olympic and Paralympic Legacy (the Committee) for agreeing to receive late written submission following the publication of the FCO's Report on the Olympic Truce, London 2012 (the Report). The Report had been expected much earlier in the year and it is surely unfortunate it was published three weeks after the scheduled 125<sup>th</sup> IOC Session (Buenos Aires, 7-10 September). See appendix 1.

**2 The utility of the Report** We welcome the Report which includes acute observations and several recommendations of real value to others. But who might these be? We make suggestions in paras 14-17 on how the Committee might take our observations forward.

**3 The Report** This comprises LOCOG strategy and summary; FCO strategy and summary; examples of promotion of the Truce; and various recommendations.

### **4 Measuring LOCOG's performance**

In our own written evidence, we stated that we had 'failed to identify a strategy against which we could measure our performance, reducing the value of our efforts to future Olympic host cities.' The Report refers to Nielsen research (p9) on the *Get Set* programme for schools and anecdotal evidence only. We are surprised there was no more robust research that this. FCO staff did submit creative proposals for measuring the success of the *Truce* and *Inspire* programmes but these were not taken forward by LOCOG or government. Consequently, we feel justified in restating our own research which showed:

At one time, 76% of schools and colleges registered and 50.7% *Get Set* had become members but only 200 (1% of total) were posted on the London 2012 website.

and later

A survey of 1000 visitors to the Olympic Park and Greenwich conducted by Olympic Truce ambassadors from several countries, convened by UNESCO, indicated that half as many British people knew about the Olympic Truce as did foreigners.

**5 Inspire Programme** The Report confirms that the decision to include the *Olympic Truce* in the *Inspire* programme was taken as late as 'early 2012' (p11, para5). By this time, some NGO members of the FCO Working Group had lost faith in the process, especially in LOCOG.

In our written submission, we wrote:

The FCO Olympic Truce website claimed Working Group membership to include skilled international NGOs such as Conciliation Resources, International Alert, Safer World and the ICRC. None of these participated in 2012 and the FCO showed no curiosity into why this was so.

**6 LOCOG's strategy for institutions** The Report makes no reference to devolved government or similar bodies which could have promoted the *Truce* strand or, in passing, the six mainstream *Inspire* themes. With regret but with this confirmation, we show again our review of relevant websites during the period of the Olympic Games:

Welsh Assembly	no reference
Scottish Parliament	no reference
Scottish government	no reference
Northern Ireland government	no reference
Olympic Legacy Company	no reference
Dept of Education	no reference after 2010; abdicated to <i>Get Set</i>
Dept of Culture, Media and Sport	no reference except for UN resolution
<i>Get Set</i>	no reference to Legacy Commitment
Dept for International Development	referred to British Council

This extends to mayors, Lord Lieutenants, provosts, high sheriffs, sheriffs, conveners and local leaders who it is clear were not contacted; neither were national faith groups.

**7 LOCOG and lost opportunities** From our first encounter with LOCOG (11 July 2011), we recognised the symptoms of an organisation uneasy in working with independent actors. Our proposal (supported by the FCO) to take advantage of the Olympic Torch route passing Central Hall Westminster, site of the inaugural meeting of the UN General Assembly (1946), on the eve of the opening of the 2012 Games, was met with institutional resistance. As it happened, on that day, none other than the UN Secretary-General carried the Torch past that very building but the symbolism was lost (Report, p12). The Report covers our replacement event held on 16 August (p54).

**8 LOCOG and the FCO Working Group** The Minutes of the Working Group show that the LOCOG representative seldom attended. This led to excessively long delays in replies to enquiries to the manifest frustration of NGOs and FCO staff alike.

**9 LOCOG and the Olympic Truce logo** We led NGO representation to seek use of the Olympic Truce logo. LOCOG delays in response (see Para 8) dampened interest and although the Report is correct in stating that explanations were made (p15, Para 4), the initial request was made on 3 December 2011 and the response was received in March 2012.

**10 LOCOG and marketing the Truce** NGO members of the FCO Working Group urged LOCOG to commission *Truce* related gifts. In Spring 2012, a badge was promised but it never arrived. So, it is with surprise we learn from the Report (p15) that an East London school did design a badge. We urge the Committee to ask LOCOG how many of these were made. Meanwhile, we feel comments in our original written submission (Paras 17, 18) are robust enough to repeat here:

(In New York) Lord Coe said '*The Olympic Truce and the Olympic Values can play a role, in combination with the Olympic Movement and sport in general, as tools for promoting peace.* It is a matter of record that neither the 2012 Official Book introduced by Lord Coe or *The Games* which covered also the Paralympics mentioned the Olympic Truce. The London 2012 Shop ignored this strand also. If the legacy is to be judged by the amount of memorabilia bought by visitors and online customers, it will stand at zero.

**11 Key Lessons learned and Recommendations** We generally endorse those made in the Report (p19). LOCOG and the FCO set out to break the outdated IOC mould (see para 13) and this initiative brought with it the understandable aggravation of dealing with NGOs like us wishing to stretch the system and in our own case, to knowingly set out to test it beyond its claimed breaking point. We make no apology for our actions which we believe served as a spur to fresh thinking in the IOC mindset. However, the Report's extraordinarily late publication is unfortunate as the 125<sup>th</sup> IOC session has passed. Also, Russia, hosts to the 2014 Winter Games, will have prepared its *Truce* strategy, to be shared when it opens the customary Olympic Truce debate at the UN General Assembly (1 December 2013). [We note the Report's mention of FCO discussions with Russia in May 2013 but if helpful analysis was shared, how come the Report was published in September]

## 12 Proposals

**13 The IOC** Exposure to the energies and activism of UK NGOs showed the IOC strategy, for what it was, to have been woefully handled. Since Spring 2012, we have stated that the IOC and the IOTC Foundation continue to be unfit for purpose in this important and historically symbolic aspect of the Olympic legacy. We see no reference to the Olympic Truce on the agenda of the 125<sup>th</sup> IOC Session nor any update to the IOTC website since the London 2012 Games. We urge the Committee to comment on this.

**14 The British Olympic Association (BOA)** The FCO informed the FCO Working Group that custody of the Olympic Truce strand would be passed to the BOA. Early indications on how it will undertake this responsibility are disappointing. The first issue of the *Olympic & Paralympic Newsletter* (6 Sept) has no reference to the Truce strand.

see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/olympic-legacy-unit-newsletters>

**15 LOCOG** We hope the Committee will ask LOCOG to reply to our observations.

**16 HMG** Earlier this month, the UN General Assembly approved by consensus that an International Day of Sport for Development and Peace is to be celebrated each year on 6 April, the date of the opening of the first modern Olympic Games in Athens in 1896. We hope the Committee will ask HMG how it intends to promote this, with what funding and with what proposed outcome.

## 17 Appendix 1 The delayed Report

**a) 8 April:** the FCO reported that following the meeting of the UK-hosted Legacy Forum on 25 March, *'we plan on writing to the Working Group with an update on this, as well as with a copy of the report which was circulated at the meeting. This should be with you hopefully by the end of this week.'*

**b) 25 April:** the FCO stated *'The IOC and the IOTC are now editing the report and we anticipate it being ready to launch at the Sport for Development and Peace Forum being held in New York in June, which Hugh Robertson will attend.'*

**c) 26 June:** In response to our enquiry, the FCO reported that *'The Report has been discussed at international forums, and the IOC and UNOSDP have now advised that they will be officially endorsing the Report. We are in final editing/preparation stages, and it should be going to the printers shortly. As per the below, we will update the entire group once it has been finalised.'*

**d) 28 August:** In response to our enquiry, the FCO reported that a new staff officer was to be responsible for the Olympic Truce Legacy.

**e) 23 September:** In response to our enquiry, the responsible FCO officer reported that he had *'received final sign off from Ministers and the Foreign Secretary this week. I am giving the text a last look for typesetting purposes and it will go for printing early next week. It should then be ready for distribution end of the week.'* We received the Report a few days later.

David Wardrop, Chairman

30 September 2013