

# United Nations Association

## Westminster Branch

Campaigning for a strong, credible and effective UN



## House of Lords Committee investigation into the Olympic and Paralympic Legacy

### Submission by David Wardrop, United Nations Association Westminster Branch

- Summary In seeking to promote the Truce strand of the Olympic message, the UK government and LOCOG set out to 'raise the bar' and so leave a clear legacy for future Olympic host cities. Even though the bar concerned had been very low or not even in place, the UK's commitment should be applauded. However, together, we failed to identify a strategy against which we could measure our performance, reducing the value of our efforts to future Olympic host cities. Even so, the UK consciously set out to flag the importance of the Truce strand and future efforts to continue this mission will surely benefit from its various initiatives.
- Whose Olympic Truce? The top-down approach was inappropriate for such programmes as this submission will show. Whilst the concepts of a truce, reconciliation and peace have always been imprecise, LOCOG's initial statement that 'we are not looking to recognise a large number of projects' suggests its enthusiasm for this strand was lacking. Its 'Truce' assessors did not appear to have relevant training and established networks were not used. Only seventeen projects were recognised.

Northern Ireland (3)	Scotland (1)	Yorkshire and Humber & North East (4)
West Midlands (1)	East of England (1)	North West (1)
London (4)	UK wide (2)	
- Host city status In focusing on a host city, each Olympic Games has a chronic weakness. London was viewed by many around the UK as a money-sucking parasite. Even though London provided the necessary infrastructure for the arenas for the majority of sporting activities, the promotion of the Olympic Truce was not so geographically identified. And yet, as shown in paragraphs 9 and 10, this opportunity was either overlooked or ignored.
- The FCO assumed leadership for promoting elements of the Truce even though its links with UK networks are weak, as shown by its inability to identify key potential players, thus weakening the impact of the Olympic Truce message.
- There was no structured contact strategy for several important national players such as:

- 6 NGOs. 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 participated in 2012 and the FCO showed no curiosity into why this was so.
- 7 National faith groups. These were not attracted by LOCOG/FCO initiatives, choosing their own stand-alone programmes and thus further weakening the message.
- 8 *Example 1 Working with the London Boroughs Faith Network, a member of the FCO Working Group, London's Islamic leaders announced at an independent Olympic Truce event that mosques would open to the public on the UN International Day of Peace (21 September). This initiative triggered mosques in other UK cities and in several countries to follow suit. See appendix 1. This will be repeated in September 2013. Separately, the Bishop of Colchester whose diocese includes the Olympic Stadium, used the Olympic Truce symbol to great local advantage.*
- 9 Mayors, Lord Lieutenants, provosts, high sheriffs, sheriffs, conveners and local leaders were not contacted, let alone requested to show leadership for local Olympic Truce initiatives.

10 Government departments and devolved government:

*Analysis of website coverage of the Olympic Truce*

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

- 11 Devolved governments sought only to reassure their constituencies that contracts were being won by local companies. In summary, the Cultural Olympics failed here as did online efforts to portray the country as one.

- 12 Generating a wider international message A potential strong card in the FCO hand was its worldwide network of embassies and consulates which it exhorted to promote the Olympic Truce. It introduced the *Storify* method to publicise their successes. Excluding NGO-led projects and opportunistic incidents, we calculate a disappointing 5% of embassies took Olympic Truce initiatives. They preferred the trade-related 'Great' theme. Either the importance of the Truce message was poorly explained to them or they felt uneasy about it.

British Embassy initiators (good!)	British Embassy opportunists (not so good!)
Sri Lanka, Finland, Ethiopia, Trinidad, Russia, Algeria, Bolivia, Namibia, Brunei	Austria, Croatia, Bolivia, Philippines, Mozambique, Malaysia, Colombia, Armenia, Jordan, Sierra Leone, Chile

- 13 The IOC commitment The IOC continues to treat too lightly its stated commitment to the Olympic Truce. At the XIII Olympic Congress in Copenhagen in 2009, 55 recommendations were agreed but none related to the Olympic Truce. The International Olympic Truce Foundation and its Executive Committee showed poor leadership during the months preceding the London Games and links with LOCOG were opaque. Its default position on the use of the Olympic Truce

symbol was shown up to be without logic or benefit to any party. If the UK's initiative had any immediate impact, it was to inadvertently embarrass the IOC which in our opinion should either honour its commitment or agree to independent review.

- 14 Example 2 Several NGOs and those working for peace wished to utilize the Olympic Truce symbol. Continuing requests to LOCOG to advance discussion were met with silence and evasion. Its representative seldom attended the regular FCO meetings. Separate contacts with the secretariat of the International Olympic Truce Centre (IOTC) based in Athens revealed that organisation's own frustration with the stalemate.
- 15 We resolved to embarrass the IOC, the IOTC and LOCOG by promoting the Olympic Truce symbol as widely as possible, despite its protected legal status. If the IOC chose to object, we reckoned it would be instructive to learn which sponsors it would claim to have been damaged.
- 16 Knowing that the IOTC had been operating an Olympic Truce Facebook Group for some months, gathering about 200 followers over that period, we created a rival. This gathered 11,000 followers from 92 countries in only three weeks. A message of support posted by the Pope made it 93! With the use of the Olympic Truce symbol thus liberated, creativity and support blossomed. Supportive images featuring the Olympic Truce symbol multiplied, both digitally created and real including a layered cake! In Pakistan, an Olympic Truce-decorated fuel tanker plied the Khyber Pass for months and was never attacked. The IOC never approached us, nor did it address its own shortcomings which had triggered our initiative.
- 17 Lord Coe's remarks at the UN Introducing the text of the Truce Resolution to the UN General Assembly, he 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.' In pursuing our own proposal for the Olympic Torch to pass through Central Hall Westminster, DCMS stated it could not influence LOCOG which was a 'private company operating independently of government.' Patiently we endured LOCOG's seeming indifference towards the Truce strand, expecting recognition when the Games commenced.
- 18 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.
- 19 The Olympic Truce wall The Top Down approach was a supreme obstacle in this symbolic element of the Olympic Truce. The Olympic Truce wall set within the Olympic Park exemplified this outdated thinking. Never again must the Olympic Truce wall be so inaccessible. Internationally, it would have been simple for UK embassies to create their own Olympic Walls, inviting host government ministers, NGOs and others to sign, thus encouraging photo opportunities. The Olympic Truce wall must become a 'global common', led by athletes but linking all peoples and their own countries.
- 20 Measuring progress In Spring 2012, the FCO tabled an imaginative list of potential metrics by which the success of the Olympic Truce project could be assessed. Neither LOCOG nor the FCO chose to progress this so we know little. The *Get Set* programme should be easiest to measure. 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. Separately, 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. (Appendix 2)

- 21 Where next? The Olympic Truce file has been passed to the British Olympic Association but to whom is it responsible? Not the government, we understand and surely not the IOC which should be seen as on parole on this issue. Further, on 25 March, the FCO hosted the Olympic Truce Legacy Forum to which UK NGOs were not invited. In a general e-mailing, the FCO stated that *'In line with our legacy priority of sharing our practical experiences with the future host nations, invitees included both diplomats from the respective London-based embassies and members of their Organising Committees of the Olympic and Paralympic Games.'* We wonder what they contributed.
- 22 The FCO continued *'We had been hoping to launch the UK's Report on the Olympic Truce during the Legacy Forum, to be co-authored by the IOC and UNOSDP....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.'*
- 23 At the time of writing (10 July), we have received no further news and I beg the Committee's indulgence to submit a commentary on the Report upon sight. I confirm this is a personal observation.

**David Wardrop, Chairman**  
**11 July 2013**

## **Appendix 1**

### **Mosques in UK and thirty countries to welcome visitors on International Day of Peace (*Press release, summary*)**

On the International Day of Peace, 21 September, mosques and Muslim centres in the UK will be opening their doors to all visitors who wish to join them during or after Friday prayers (Salaatul-Jumu'a) in exchanging messages of peace, to celebrate local peace-building activities and to enjoy hospitality offered. They will be joined by others in more than thirty countries, some as far as Thailand.

But recognising that a simple statement would not be enough, they explored how they might best share with those in their own neighbourhoods their commitment to the cause of peace. By welcoming all people to join them to mark the International Day of Peace, they feel they can best demonstrate this. News of the initiative was shared and soon they were joined by those in other countries.

"Current events worldwide too readily lead to stereotyping and violence which harms us all." said Youssef Al Khoei of the Al Khoei Foundation based in London. "Such trench warfare leads nowhere so we must come out of those trenches and embrace each other. When we show interest in and learn about each other, we are on the path leading to knowing and trusting each other. The unprecedented step we have taken has been planned for some time but, in the light of current developments, it is surely timely."

Some Islamic centres in the UK are pairing up with nearby churches, religious communities or schools, linking their observances of the International Day of Peace to similar pairs overseas. This unprecedented initiative is being led by the London Peace Network and a large number of Islamic bodies and is an London 2012 Inspire project.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Only 1 in 19 People in London Know of the Olympic Truce Brits knowledge of the Olympic Truce is less than foreign visitors**

#### ***Survey undertaken by UNESCO Youth Peace Ambassadors of the London 2012 Olympic Peace Campaign (summary)***

The youth participants of the UNESCO Olympic Truce Youth Peace Ambassador Training Workshop conducted over one thousand interviews on Tuesday 4th September around the Olympic Park, the Equestrian Event Site and Central London. People from 70 countries were asked the question whether they had heard of the Olympic Truce. Only 57 of 1034 respondents said they had (5.5%), and many of these had not specifically heard about it in London 2012.

610 respondents were from the UK, and only 4.3% of them had heard of the truce, compared to 7.3% among the foreign visitors to London.