

BIGMUN 2023
GA3: SOCHUM

Research Report

Topic 3: Developing a framework for sustainable global sporting events.



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Introduction:

Welcome to the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly – the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM). First founded in 1945 in reaction to the establishment of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights¹, SOCHUM gears its focus onto the promotion of fundamental freedoms through the abolition of racism and racial discrimination, the protection of children, indigenous issues, the treatment of refugees, and the right to self-determination, frequently addressing social development questions such as issues related to youth, family, aging, persons with disabilities, crime prevention, criminal justice, and international drug control². This specific report will be an introduction to the general unsustainability of sporting events and the possibility and process of building a framework meant to counter these environmental and economic effects. The world currently sees a drastic increase in global warming. With this, more people become exposed to drastic weather events and famines. The poor and vulnerable see more detrimental effects on their quality of living, and with this increases the divide between the richer and poorer. As rich countries fight between each other, to host global sporting events, they are debating large sums of money. Both being invested, as well as earned back through tourism. However, as travel and infrastructure produce massive amounts of greenhouse emissions, it seems that the environment is not the most important thing on the table. This report will list key-players, issues, as well as progress made in the direction of a more sustainable framework, illustrating how much more still needs to be done for greenhouse-emission neutrality.

Definition of Key Terms:

- **Sustainability:** Specific definitions of sustainability seem to differ depending on context and lenses perceived though, in the broadest sense, sustainability may be defined as the ability to maintain or support a process continuously over time³, ie. the prevention of the unnatural depletion of natural and physical resources for the sake of sustaining the most optimum way of procedure possible, with the least consequences possible. Sustainability can be broken down into the economic, environmental, and social facets, informally known as profit, planet, and people⁴. This breakdown showcases the integrated priorities our species has, and tells us that we want to continue with the optimum way of progression in each facet, with the least amount of consequences to all of them.
- **Economic Viability:** Economic viability alludes to the ideal situation in which the economic benefits of the project exceed its economic costs, when analyzed for society as a whole. The economic costs of the project are not the same as its financial costs—

¹ "SOCHUM: Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Committee | NHSMUN." <https://imuna.org/nhsmun/nyc/committees/sochum-social-humanitarian-cultural-committee/>. Accessed 28 Dec. 2022.

² "Third Committee - Social, Humanitarian & Cultural - the United Nations." <https://www.un.org/en/ga/third/>. Accessed 28 Dec. 2022.

³ "What is Sustainability? How Sustainabilities Work, Benefits, and" <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/sustainability.asp>. Accessed 6 Jan. 2023.

⁴ "What is Sustainability? How Sustainabilities Work, Benefits, and" <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/sustainability.asp>. Accessed 6 Jan. 2023.

externalities and environmental impacts should be considered⁵. This rhetoric is incredibly important to consider when organizing large-scale sporting events, such as the Olympics or the World Cup, for example, assessing the economic viability of a stadium might include both direct and indirect considerations such as: the long-term effects and future of said project, and its fiscal, financial, economic, social, touristic, and environmental cost or gain⁶.

- **Environmental Protection:** Environmental Protection, of course, refers to the protection of the environment the natural environment by individuals, organizations, and governments, via conserving natural resources and the existing natural environment and, where possible, repairing damage and reversing trends. Environmental Protection works against the variously faceted and severe pressures of overconsumption, population growth, and unsustainable globalization effects to reverse or minimize the degradation of our biophysical environment. Of course, there is disagreement on the extent of the environmental impact of human activity, so protection measures and their necessity are frequently debated.
- **Social Equity:** Social equity is defined as the impartiality, fairness, and justice for all people in social policy. Social equity is different from social equality as its basis is built upon taking into account systemic inequalities to ensure everyone in a community has access to the same opportunities and outcomes in spite of oppressive social ideologies and systemic obstacles. Equity acknowledges that inequalities exist and works to eliminate them⁷.
- **Modernization:** Sociologically, modernization is the transformation from a traditional, rural, agrarian society to a secular, urban, industrial society⁸, and is a term that usually comes hand in hand with globalization. Modernization, along with other factors, has been at least partially blamed for the lack of sustainable development in our modern society.
- **Industrialization:** Simply defined as the “process of transforming the economy of a nation or region from a focus on agriculture to a reliance on manufacturing”, industrialization is both a social and economic process that relied on mechanized methods of mass production and other largely unsustainable aspects of production and consumption that prioritize economic growth over general sustainability.
- **Sustainable Development Goals:** Frequently abbreviated into ‘SDGs’, Sustainable Development Goals, also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity⁹. These Goals are important to consider when dealing with issues of sustainability and prosperity in a UN setting.

⁵ "Assessing Project Feasibility and Economic Viability - PPPLRC." 24 Jun. 2022, <https://ppp.worldbank.org/public-private-partnership/assessing-project-feasibility-and-economic-viability>. Accessed 6 Jan. 2023.

⁶ "Economic viability - Designing Buildings Wiki." 7 Sep. 2020, https://www.designingbuildings.co.uk/wiki/Economic_viability. Accessed 6 Jan. 2023.

⁷ "What Is Social Equity? Definition & Examples | United Way NCA." 27 Aug. 2021, <https://unitedwaynca.org/blog/what-is-social-equity/>. Accessed 6 Jan. 2023.

⁸ "Modernization | Nature, Features, Examples, & Facts | Britannica." 5 Dec. 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/modernization>. Accessed 6 Jan. 2023.

⁹ "Sustainable Development Goals." <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>. Accessed 6 Jan. 2023.

Background Information:

Without a doubt, one of the most important issues of our time is sustainability, which comes with severe implications on many different social, environmental, and economic levels. The effects of significant issues like climate change, economic inequality, and social injustice are felt by people all over the world, some much more than others. Sustainability in sports would mean conducting sporting events that utilize environmentally friendly methods of production and consumption to reduce the negative impact on the environment. It allows organizers and consumers to minimize their carbon footprint. While delving into this topic, it is important to recognize sports' unrivalled abilities in realms of inspiration and influence to an incredibly large extent. Sports, much like most industries built post-modernization, have been largely unsustainable and borderline unethical. Ranging from equipment and merchandise manufacturing, stadium and court building, to issues such as littering and surges in airplane and car trips taken for the sake of consumer attendance of sporting events, questions surrounding environmental effects, economic dependence, and labor ethics are frequently asked. According to The United Nations Environment Programme: "Building and managing a sport facility and operating an event uses energy and can contribute to air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and waste generation, as well as to ozone-layer depletion, habitat and biodiversity loss, soil erosion and water pollution."¹⁰ The impacts — which are common in large public organizations, and hardly limited to sports — include damage to fragile ecosystems, noise and light pollution, energy use and emissions, soil and water pollution, and waste generation¹¹. Both historical and modern examples of sporting events' devastation are easily available, such as the Rio Games in 2016, which saw 17,000+ tonnes of waste being produced, used 29,5000 Gigawatts of electricity most of it coming from non-renewables along with 29,000+ liters of fuel, and emitted more than 3.6 million tonnes of Carbon in the air. Additionally, the Rio Games saw sewage being dumped in already polluted Guanabara Bay, and the destruction of the Marapendi Bio-reserve, home to some of the rarest species of butterflies to accommodate golf, the Committee then promised to plant 24 million trees while the organizers only planted about 8 million of them¹². Going further back in time, we have the Sydney Olympics in 2000, which saw that the waste generated was land-filled on-site and did not practice segregation or treatment of waste. While the Games in Athens in 2004, saw them use their Schinias wetland, for competitions such as rowing and canoeing, which were one of the few natural wetlands remaining in the area¹³. Air pollution, industrial pollution, and shortage of water facilities have been seen to have long-term adverse effects on the sports event's host cities and its people.

Major Countries and Organisations Involved:

¹⁰ "Reducing Sports' Impact on the Environment - Knowledge at Wharton." 13 Dec. 2013, <https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/reducing-sports-impact-environment/>. Accessed 6 Jan. 2023.

¹¹ "Environmental impact of sports | World Problems & Global Issues." 17 Mar. 2021, <http://encyclopedia.uia.org/en/problem/240409>. Accessed 6 Jan. 2023.

¹² "The adverse environmental effects of the Olympics - Qrius." 23 Nov. 2021, <https://qrius.com/the-adverse-environmental-effects-of-the-olympics/>. Accessed 6 Jan. 2023.

¹³ "The adverse environmental effects of the Olympics - Qrius." 23 Nov. 2021, <https://qrius.com/the-adverse-environmental-effects-of-the-olympics/>. Accessed 6 Jan. 2023.

FIFA: According to **FIFA**, the organization has “continued to strengthen its requirements and programs related to environmental protection¹⁴”. **FIFA** has joined the UN sports for climate action framework and planned on limiting emissions for example during the 2022 Qatar World Cup. The World Cup however was far from carbon neutral, as it had promised to be when Qatar bid as World Cup hosts all the way in 2009. The organization did not meet up to the claims of picking its candidates with a focus on the environment, and although Qatar did things for climate neutrality, there is a long way to go. For example, in its recent report, Carbon Market Watch found that when FIFA tabulated the carbon footprint for building seven new stadiums, it ignored enormous sources of carbon, underestimating emissions by a factor of eight¹⁵.

UEFA: As an organization owned by **FIFA**, **UEFA** has launched its own Sustainable Infrastructure Guidelines. Their plans are for the German **UEFA** to be the most sustainable global sporting event yet. During the Euro finals 2020, **UEFA** emitted 35,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide. The sporting events' progress is continuous but far from reaching its goal.

Twickenham Stadium: Opened in 1909, owned by the Rugby Football Union and with a capacity of 82,000, this stadium located in Twickenham, south-west London, England, is a rugby union stadium that also acts as the headquarters for an English rugby union governing body. The England national rugby union team plays home matches at the stadium. This stadium has shown an example of sustainable action by instituting a deposit and return system for beverages served at games.

International Olympic Committee: Frequently abbreviated into ‘**IOC**’, the **International Olympic Committee** is a non-governmental sports organization based in Lausanne, Switzerland. The committee’s current president is Thomas Bach, and it’s constituted in the form of an association under the Swiss Civil Code. The committee’s subsidiaries are the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa, Panam Sports, Olympic Council of Asia, European Olympic Committees, Olympic Broadcasting Services, Oceania National Olympic Committees, and the Olympic Channel Services. The **IOC** describes sustainability as being one of the three main pillars on the agenda, wishing for the **IOC** to be at the forefront of sustainable sporting events. One of the main strategies for this is building recycling, for instance, the Tokyo 2020 Olympics was dubbed “the most sustainable Games yet” due to recycling buildings from 1964. The committee has also pledged to eliminate single-use plastics at its headquarters, the Olympic Museum, and all of its events. Despite all this, **IOC** has a long history of not paying penalties when sustainability goals are not made.

France: As the next **IOC** is going to be held in Paris, the city has put out a promising framework

¹⁴ "Sustainability - FIFA." <https://www.fifa.com/social-impact/sustainability>. Accessed 6 Jan. 2023.

¹⁵ "The World Cup In Qatar Is a Climate Catastrophe - Scientific American." 23 Nov. 2022, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-world-cup-in-qatar-is-a-climate-catastrophe/>. Accessed 6 Jan. 2023.

for limiting carbon neutrality, including using existing infrastructure, as well as limiting parking space to urge people to use public transportation and bikes. The other cities Paris was up against, LA and Budapest, had put impressive frameworks out as well. Although Budapest did not win the spot, it has started a debate about hosting major events in smaller cities to forcefully limit emissions.

Adidas: Adidas is one of the leading companies in the sports world, and with the ability to sponsor events and manufacture equipment used in large-scale sporting affairs for both players and consumers, it is incredibly important to think of the manufacturers of sporting gear and equipment in the sense of merchandise, athlete gear, and court paraphernalia, etc. **Adidas**, specifically claims to have “[...] aggressively tackled the use of plastic and introduced recycled polyester across its entire product range¹⁶,” and hopes that by 2024, it will only use recycled polyester wherever possible, claiming that today, more than 90% of the polyester used is recycled polyester. Unfortunately, **Adidas**, like many more companies falls short when it comes to the publication of policies and transparency, particularly on materials linked to deforestation such as leather. Additionally, no evidence has been found that Adidas has policies to protect biodiversity in its supply chain. The brand was also penalized for misleading consumers over environmental claims. According to the French Jury de Déontologie Publicitaire (JDP)¹⁷, Adidas’ “Stan Smith Forever. 100% iconic, 50% recycled” ad broke advertising rules and misled consumers, **Adidas** has also fallen short in labor ethics and animal welfare¹⁸.

The Global Sustainability Benchmark in Sports: Frequently abbreviated into ‘**GSBS**’, **The Global Sustainability Benchmark in Sports** defines itself as “a global, independent not-for-profit organization with the clear objective to tackle the challenges of the 21st century by rating and benchmarking the sustainability performance of the protagonists of the professional sports industry¹⁹,” located in London, United Kingdom, and with the current CEO being Christian Hartmann. This organization recognizes the influential-ity of the sports industry and hopes to help bring sustainability into the industry for the sake of the present and future generations. This specific organization harbors a massive focus on reporting for the sake of “[...] the determination of the status quo [...]” and because “[...] reporting uncovers weaknesses and strengths, it creates true accountability and trust within the society, it also makes progress visible and measurable. The constant tracking of data allows the detection of improvement potential and enables early risk recognition.” **GSBS** also claims that there is clear scientific evidence that more sustainable organizations outperform those less sustainable. The **GSBS** also claims to use their Reporting Framework to publish annual Sustainability Performance Rating reports with percentages ranking

¹⁶ "More Sustainable Materials and Circular Services - adidas Group." <https://www.adidas-group.com/en/sustainability/environmental-impacts/more-sustainable-materials-and-circular-services/>. Accessed 6 Jan. 2023.

¹⁷ "Ethics jury finds Adidas ad is greenwashing." 1 Sep. 2021, https://internationalleathermaker.com/news/fullstory.php/aid/10277/Ethics_jury_finds_Adidas_ad_is_green_washing.html. Accessed 6 Jan. 2023.

¹⁸ "How Ethical Is Adidas? - Good On You." 23 Mar. 2022, <https://goodonyou.eco/adidas-ethical/>. Accessed 6 Jan. 2023.

¹⁹ "GSBS | Sustainability | Sport | Global Sustainability | | Sustainability" <https://www.thegsbs.org/>. Accessed 6 Jan. 2023.

performance, these ratings are said to focus specifically on the aspects of corporate, environmental, social, and governance. 2022's report can be found via signing up on their website to have it be emailed to you, or [here](#).

Relevant UN Resolutions:

“[Sport as an enabler for Sustainable Development](#)”; Adopted by the General Assembly on the 3d of December 2018, encourages Member States and relevant stakeholders to emphasize and advance the use of sport as a vehicle to foster sustainable development, acknowledging the role played by sport and the Olympic Movement.²⁰

When discussing the issue of creating sustainable global sporting events, for the sake of a better climate that does not endanger the most vulnerable people living around the globe, there are multiple Universal Declaration of Human Rights in question, listed below:

- Article 3: Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person.
- Article 17,2: No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.
- Article 25,1: Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care, and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.²¹

Furthermore, United Nations General Assembly voted on July 28, 2022, to declare the ability to live in “a clean, healthy and sustainable environment” a universal human right. It also called on countries, companies, and international organizations to scale up efforts to turn that into reality.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue:

The general topic of sustainability has been gaining steady traction since the previous century and a multitude of companies, committees, and organizations have pledged to take action against the severe damage they have inflicted on the social and natural environment for the sake of monetary gain and other philistine-ic and materialistic benefits. Yet, it has become increasingly clear that much of the pledging done is for the sake of public image and to appeal to the newly environmentally versed generations, and not out of genuine concern for the sustainability of our planet and society. Examples of this include the **IOC**'s failure to deliver an active framework of sustainability, its failure to deliver consequences for unsustainable action, and the Brazil World Cup's failure to meet environmental goals, possibly due to **FIFA**'s promises themselves being unsustainable for the country's weak economy and social issues. This attitude may be due to a lack of proper consequences, a lack of proper enforcement of said consequences, or the generally non-altruistic and untouchable-like attitude of the unbelievably wealthy and influential. This is

²⁰ “United nations resolution recognises the importance of sport for sustainable development” <https://olympics.com/ioc/news/united-nations-resolution-recognises-the-importance-of-sport-for-sustainable-development>

²¹ United Nations. “Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” *OHCHR*, <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2021/03/udhr.pdf>. Accessed 6 January 2023.

not to say that all attempts are unsuccessful, 2019's Helsinki International Horse Show was horse-powered in more senses than one, as part of a range of zero-waste measures, Finland's biggest indoor sporting event was entirely powered by electricity generated from horse manure²². Fortum HorsePower, the company behind the scheme, was able to generate 150-megawatt hours of electricity by using over 135 tonnes of manure collected from competing horses. Amsterdam's Johan Crujff stadium, found a sustainable way to replace its 53,000 seats, selling most as souvenirs or recycling them, then producing their replacements from 100% recycled plastic – 10% of it recovered from the oceans. Additionally, NFL Green has collaborated with numerous organizations for a kelp restoration project and beach clean-up at Cabrillo Beach in San Pedro, Los Angeles, and as of 2022, the restoration plots created are roughly the size of a football field. Another part of NFL Green's sustainability initiatives is a project called Green and Win. "To encourage recycling, fans who are caught recycling can win a Super Bowl hat and have their photos posted on NFL social media²³."

Possible Solutions:

- Establishing a committee dedicated to reviewing carbon dioxide emission plans for cities applying as hosts for global sporting events, as well as their possibility of reusing infrastructure for those events.
- Implementing laws that make the parties failing their emission plans responsible, as well as enforcing penalties to make up for the emission of carbon with established and properly implemented consequences in case of failure.
- Creating an international committee that ensures work between different global sporting event organizations, both for holding each other accountable for sustainability, as well as broader possibilities for reusing infrastructure.
- Holding the countries accountable for the global events' carbon emissions, and letting them pay financial penalties for the sporting events.

Possible Questions to Consider:

- ★ Is it the organizations or the countries that profit from tourism to the events?
- ★ Who should be held most accountable for greenhouse emissions?
- ★ Should the solution revolve around limiting carbon footprint, or investing the money in mitigation as a compensation tactic?
- ★ To which degree can we host global sporting events sustainably, and how is that achieved?
- ★ How much should sports organizations be held accountable for failure to meet promises, and should they alone pay the price?

²² "4 ways sustainable sports are becoming a thing." 11 Nov. 2019, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/11/sustainable-sport-olympics-showjumping-zero-waste-superbowl/>. Accessed 6 Jan. 2023.

²³ "How Sustainable Is the Super Bowl? - Brightly Eco." 10 Feb. 2022, <https://brightly.eco/blog/how-sustainable-is-the-super-bowl/>. Accessed 6 Jan. 2023.

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