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PRESS RELEASE

INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEES OF AFRICA



DAKAR 2026

YOUTH OLYMPIC GAMES

HISTORIC COUNTDOWN FOR AFRICA!



With 365 days to go until the official launch of the Youth Olympic Games Dakar 2026, Africa is entering the final stretch of one of the most symbolic moments in its sports history.

For the first time in history, Africa will host an Olympic event. This dream, nurtured for decades by the African Olympic and Sports Movement, has now taken shape thanks to the shared vision of the Presidents of the IOC, ANOCA, and Senegal, the host country for this maiden edition.

"AN AFRICAN DREAM COME TRUE"

In his official message on the occasion of D-365, ANOCA President Mustapha BERRAF hailed the historic significance of this event in the following words:



"Dakar 2026 is far more than just a competition. It is a defining moment. Africa is writing a new page in its sports and Olympic history. These Games embody our faith in young people, our confidence in our potential, and our ability to organise a world-class event that reflects who we are, with excellence and dignity."

The ANOCA President also paid tribute to the work carried out by the Local Organising Committee, the IOC and technical partners:

"Thanks to Olympic solidarity and the concerted efforts of the Senegalese government and CNOSS, we have turned ambition into action. The Diamniadio Stadium, the Olympic Village, and the sports venues in Dakar, Saly and Saint-Louis demonstrate the rigour, pride and commitment of a continent on the rise."



According to Mustapha BERRAF, Dakar 2026 is much more than just a showcase:

"***It is a promise for the future. Africa is hosting the Games, but it is all of humanity that will come here to celebrate youth, peace and diversity. These Games will be an expression of the best of ourselves - unity, fraternity and creativity.***"

A LASTING LEGACY FOR AFRICA

Beyond the sports event itself, the YOG Dakar 2026 are part of a long-term development vision. President FAYE has announced several major initiatives, including the construction of multipurpose sports halls in the municipalities of Dakar, Diamniadio and Saly, as well as a "***national network of local sports facilities and infrastructure***."

The Civic and Sports Olympic Certificate (BOCS) programme, already embraced by 250,000 students from 3,550 schools with a target of 900,000 students by October 2026, illustrates this transformative approach. The Olympic Torch tour of Senegal's fourteen regions will attest to "***the inclusive and festive nature of the Games for all the country's young people.***"



APPEAL FOR CONTINENTAL MOBILISATION

The Honourable Mustapha BERRAF appealed fervently to all stakeholders in African sports:

"Let us join forces, mobilise our resources and coordinate our actions to make Dakar 2026 a resounding success that will echo far beyond our borders and long after the closing ceremony."

ACCORDING TO THE ANOCA PRESIDENT,

"Dakar 2026 presents a significant challenge for Africa, one that extends far beyond the realm of sports. While it is certainly an organisational challenge, it is above all developmental. These Games will be an extraordinary showcase, demonstrating to the wide world that Africa is not only a breeding ground for sports talent, but also a continent that can excel in organisation, innovation and management of world-class events."

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Under the compelling motto "***Africa welcomes, Dakar celebrates***", Senegal and the entire continent are preparing to welcome thousands of young athletes from five continents. This three-pronged mobilisation of the highest authorities - ANOCA, IOC and Senegal - shows that Dakar 2026 is far more than just a sports event, it is a defining moment bringing social transformation, youth empowerment and the continent's pride.

"***Africa has a date with history***". Concluded the Honourable Mustapha BERRAF. "***We cannot afford to let down our young people, our continent or the world, which is watching us with keen interest and, dare we say, with admiration.***"

'AFRICAN SPORTS, INSPIRING THE WORLD'

Kirsty COVENTRY, IOC President, first woman and first African to hold this position, stated that Dakar 2026 marks a milestone in the transformation of the global Olympic Movement:

"***I am proud to see the African continent hosting these Games. Senegal embodies the determination, hospitality and youthful spirit of all of Africa. These Youth Olympic Games are a celebration of the power of sports to unite people and inspire future generations.***"



In her message, the IOC President also highlighted the vision bequeath to her by her predecessor, Thomas BACH, who laid the groundwork for the historic organisation of this event:

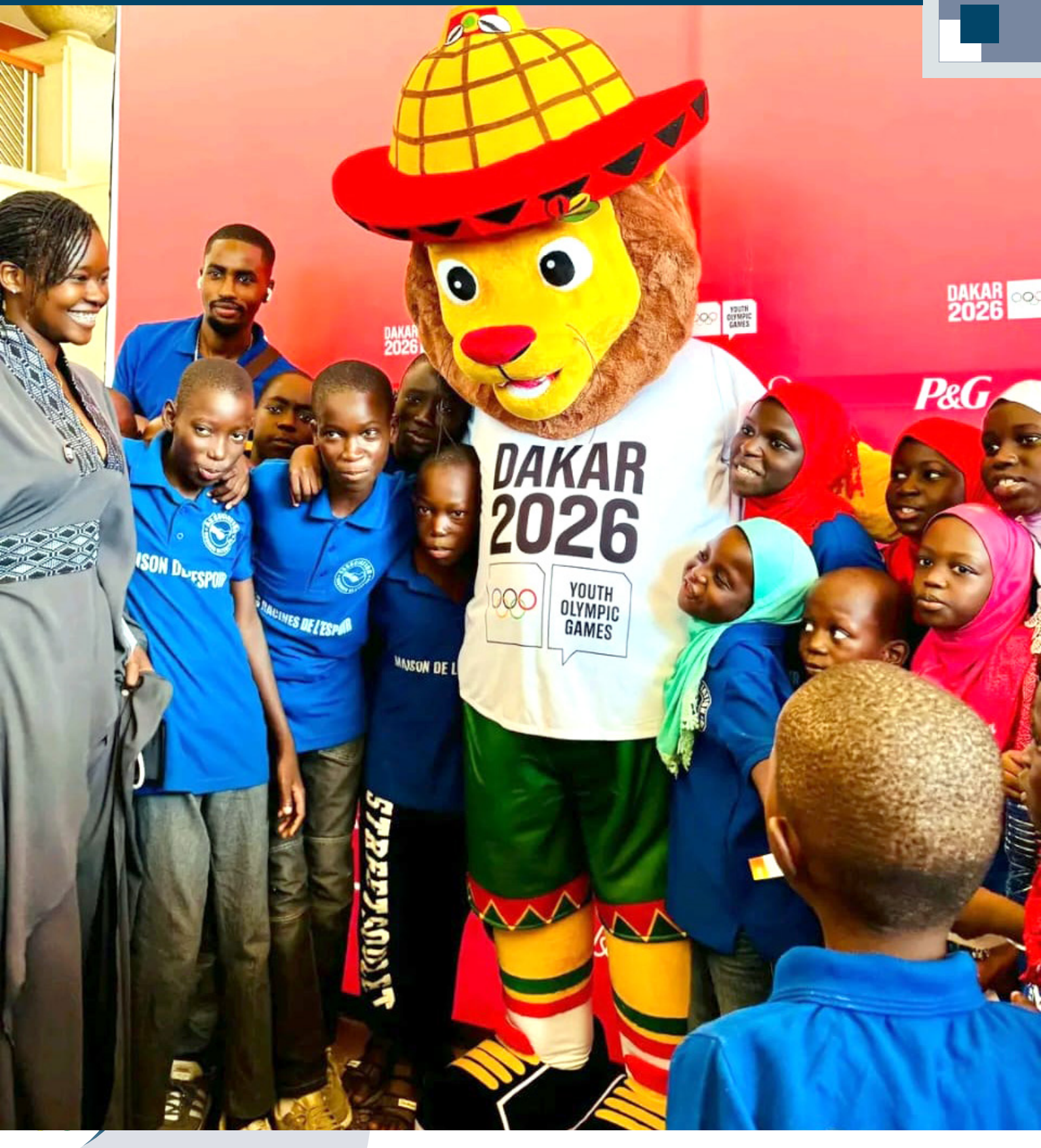
'President Thomas BACH believed in Africa and its ability to shine. Today, this trust is bearing its fruits. Dakar 2026 is a symbol of equality, inclusion and recognition of the key role of the African Olympic Movement.'

Mrs COVENTRY reaffirmed the IOC's total commitment to supporting Senegal and ANOCA in efforts to ensure the success of the event:

'The IOC remains committed, with its solidarity and technical support programmes, to ensuring the success of Dakar 2026. These Games will be exemplary in terms of sustainability, education and social impact.'

'SENEGAL, AFRICA'S VOICE'

Speaking with pride and humility, the President of the Republic of Senegal, His Excellency Bassirou DIOMAYE FAYE stated:



'Senegal is honoured to be the first African country to host an Olympic event. But beyond Senegal, it is all of Africa that will be welcoming the world. It is therefore our responsibility to prove that our continent is capable of building, innovating and organising the Games to the highest standards.'



The Head of State emphasised the lasting legacy that the Games will bequeath to future generations:

'***The facilities we are building will not only be for the twelve days of competition, but for decades of education, training and social cohesion. Dakar 2026 is a catalyst for development for our young people and a driving force for our nations.***'

He also expressed his gratitude to the IOC and ANOCA:

'***I commend the IOC for its trust and ANOCA for its leadership, especially that of President Mustapha BERRAF, for their vision and sustained commitment to African sport. Together, we will prove that Africa deserves its place at the top of the global Olympic Movement.***'

SYMBOL OF AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

With one year to go, preparations for Dakar 2026 reflect unprecedented joint efforts. The Games will bring together more than 2,600 young athletes from five continents to compete in 35 sports in a sustainable and inclusive format.

Under the theme '***Africa Inspires the World***', Dakar 2026 will mark a turning point:

- **Sustainability**: Eco-friendly facilities, solar energy, and reduced carbon footprint;
- **Education**: 'Olympism and Culture' programme for Senegalese and African schools;
- **Legacy**: Development of regional sports centres, training of instructors and referees, and programmes for both girls and boys.

AYO, THE FACE OF THE GAMES

The official mascot of the YOG Dakar 2026, named AYO, perfectly embodies the aspirations of these 'dynamic, creative and ambitious' African youths that are 'ready to make history in the sports world. AYO is the outcome of a nationwide competition involving thousands of students from all school districts in Senegal, and represents 'the artistic talent, inventiveness and creative genius of our school children,' said President Bassirou DIOMAYE FAYE.

With its beaming smile and bright colours, the mascot reflects the values of diversity, solidarity and excellence promoted by these historic Games, which will take place from 24 October to 15 November 2026.

AFRICA ON THE ROAD TO ITS OLYMPIC DESTINY

The YOG Dakar 2026 is a key moment for an entire African continent. It is a culmination of a shared vision among the IOC, ANOCA, NOC Senegal (CNOSS) and the Government of Senegal.

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For Mustapha BERRAF, this edition should be considered a prelude to a broader Olympic future for Africa:

'*Dakar 2026 is the first chapter in a long story. After the Games, Africa will have to take a step further and prepare to host the Olympic Games themselves one day. We now have the capacity, the youths and the conviction to do so.*'


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