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IOC AND ANOCA ATHLETES' COMMISSIONS DEEPEN COLLABORATION



Dakar, Senegal, 6 November 2026 - The Athletes' Commissions (ACs) of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa (ANOCA) met on the sidelines of the Youth Olympic Games Dakar 2026, to review their activities and explore ways to better involve athletes in the Olympic Movement. The athlete engagement programme throughout the Games was organised jointly with the AC of the host continent, in this case the ANOCA AC.

The meeting was co-chaired by IOC AC Chair, Pau Gasol Sáez, and ANOCA AC Chair, Gaby Ahrens. Opening addresses were delivered by IOC President Kirsty Coventry and ANOCA President Mustapha Berraf, who is also an IOC Member and ANOC Vice President.

In his remarks, Pau Gasol Sáez expressed his delight that the meeting was being held in Senegal, on African soil, noting that it offered a valuable opportunity for both commissions to come



together, engage in dialogue and strengthen their ties. Gaby Ahrens, for her part, said she was truly proud to see the two commissions meeting.

Taking the floor, IOC President Kirsty Coventry said she was deeply moved to take part in the meeting. She congratulated members of both commissions on their work and encouraged them to sustain their efforts to ensure that athletes' voices are heard more clearly within the Olympic Movement.

President Coventry is well acquainted with these issues from personal experience. A former elite swimmer, she won seven Olympic medals - including gold in the 200m backstroke at Athens 2004 and Beijing 2008, plus four silver and one bronze - as well as several World Championship medals in both long-course and short-course events, and held multiple world records.

ANOCA President Mustapha Berraf is also a former elite athlete. An Algerian international



basketball player for twelve years and a multiple champion during his career, he finished as the third-highest scorer at the European Championships in Böblingen, Germany.

In his opening address, President Berraf recalled that generations had dreamt of seeing Africa host its first Youth Olympic Games. He commended Senegal for its warm hospitality and reaffirmed the responsibility of sports bodies to give young people the means to develop their talent and pursue their ambitions, while expressing special thanks to the people of Senegal for opening their arms wide to the youth of the world.

Following the opening, Gaby Ahrens and members of the ANOCA AC presented their ongoing activities.

The two commissions then discussed ways to continue their cooperation and to give athletes a more active role within the Olympic Movement.

The meeting concluded with a workshop on the Olympic brand, facilitated by the IOC, during which members of both commissions shared ideas on the evolution of the brand and what the Olympic rings mean to them.

"***What I find beautiful about the rings is that their meaning evolves as you grow up,***" said IOC AC member Husein Alireza. "***When you're young, they represent excellence. When you become an athlete, you understand what lies behind the grandeur of the Games, and then you discover the community that surrounds them.***"