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First I would like to thank the President of the International Olympic Committee, Mr. Jacques Rogge, for the opportunity to contribute to this important Olympic Movement event, and to the President of the Association of National Olympic Committees, Mr. Mario Vázquez Raña, to propose my name to speak on behalf of my NOCs colleagues at this breakout session. It is an honor for me to share this moment with all our Olympic Family, and address this very important theme that is the Relationship between the athletes, the clubs, federations and the NOCs.

It is well known that athletes begin their careers in sports associations, clubs, schools and gyms – in other words, at the base of the pyramid of the sports system we are familiar with.

As they develop their sports abilities, athletes rise within these different entities. When their performance reaches an outstanding level, they begin seeking sponsors and other support, granting rights to use their image, and so on.

Subsequently, they join regional, national and international associations, and ultimately their National Olympic Committee or even the International Olympic Committee itself.

The intention of athletes is to improve their performance. That is what they strive for incessantly, and in order for them to achieve this goal, they seek partnerships with the entities mentioned before. All of them, in turn, want to help athletes and promote them, and that is where conflicts arise.

This multiplicity of relationships is inevitable in the current sports system, where even individual, independent athletes are obliged to be members of clubs and national, regional and international associations in order to participate in the official sports calendar, whether on a local, regional, national, continental or global level.

Unfortunately, this profusion of relationships generates an apparently inevitable overlap of rights and obligations, giving rise to numerous conflicts of interests and rights, since there are no clear limits to each party's scope of action. Precise and objective rules are needed, as in sport itself. Who has the right to what, when and for how long?

Each contract – particularly those involving sponsors, supporters, suppliers and the granting of rights to images – agreed with each one of the entities that has a relationship with an athlete has a direct impact on that athlete, who, in turn, will be in the process of turning professional and entering into his or her own contracts with sponsors, supporters, suppliers and holders of rights to his/her image. In other words, there are numerous responsibilities that the athlete has, and any conflict between contracts will end up harming him or her.

Athletes must be protected, and it is up to the Olympic Movement – meaning national and international federations, and National Olympic Committees – to seek a solution that provides athletes with a more secure and predictable environment in which to compete and exploit their potentialities.

Establishing clearer and more specific rules about the rights and responsibilities of each member of the Olympic Movement will benefit athletes above all, since all of them want to work professionally, but the conflicts that take place during their professional lives most often emerge when they are not yet at professional or elite level.

In addition, a clearer and more precise definition of rights and responsibilities will benefit all parties involved in the process, and sport in general, as it will lend more legal security and professionalism to relationships within the Olympic Movement. This security concerning what can be done and what cannot be done at each rung of the athlete's career ladder will thereby preserve and strengthen the autonomy of sports entities, supporting the principles contained in the Olympic Charter.

As a result we – the National and International Federations, and National Olympic Committees – must meet to establish clearer and more precise rules concerning the rights and responsibilities of each member of the Olympic Movement, to together set limits of scope for each member, thereby facilitating the lives of our athletes.