

BOCOG holds sponsor hospitality workshop

(BEIJING, Nov. 7) -- The Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG) opened the first Sponsor Hospitality Workshop for the year of 2008 in Beijing on Tuesday.

In his opening remarks, BOCOG Executive Vice President and Secretary-General Wang Wei said the participation and support of sponsors constitute a crucial force to drive forward the Olympic Movement.

The preparatory work for the Beijing Olympics has seen the strong support from the sponsors to the BOCOG, whose marketing program has shifted from the solicitation of sponsors to the service for the sponsors, Wang added.

One of the major tasks facing BOCOG is to extend hospitality and rights protection to the sponsors, and to help them to take the Olympics as an opportunity to open up their development areas. This is also an important move to ensure a high-level Olympiad with distinguishing features, Wang said.

The hospitality for sponsors is a major way of reward by BOCOG and a significant component of BOCOG service for the sponsors, with an aim to safeguard their rights and interests to render Games-time hospitality to their clients and guests.

During the two-day workshop, heads of various BOCOG departments will update the representatives of sponsors on marketing, venue operation, accommodation, transport, ticketing, rate cards, registration, security, spectator service, reception at the airport, sponsor hospitality center, sponsor on-site display, customs, logistics and co-host cities.

More than 200 representatives attended the first-day session. They included heads of the teams involved in the Olympic work from the Worldwide Olympic Partners of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), best known as the TOP VI Sponsors, Beijing 2008 Partners, Sponsors, Exclusive Suppliers and Suppliers, IOC, related departments of BOCOG, the Beijing 2008 Environmental Construction Office, and six co-host cities, namely Qingdao (for Olympic sailing events), Shanghai, Shenyang, Tianjin, Qinhuangdao (for football preliminaries) and Hong Kong (for equestrian events).

Two workshops of this kind were held in June 2005 and June 2006.

Since the Beijing 2008 Olympic marketing plan was launched on September 1, 2003, 11 enterprises namely Bank of China, China Network, Sinopec, CNPC, China Mobile, Volkswagen

(China), adidas, Johnson & Johnson, Air China, PICC P&C and State Grid, have been selected as Beijing 2008 Partners.

Meanwhile 10 others have been selected as Beijing 2008 Sponsors, namely UPS, Haier, Budweiser, SOHU, Yili, Tsingtao Beer, Yanjing Beer, BHP Billiton, Heng Yuan Xiang, and President Enterprises.

The 10 Beijing 2008 Exclusive Suppliers announced to date are COFCO Wines & Spirits (Greatwall Wine), Mengna, Beifa, Vantage, YADU, Effem Foods (Beijing), Qianxihe, Syneer, Kerry Oil & Grains (China) Limited (Arwana), and Beijing Gehua Ticketmaster Ticketing Co., Ltd. The only Beijing 2008 Supplier selected so far is Crystal CG.

The 11 IOC Worldwide Olympic Partners Coca-Cola, Atos Origin, General Electric, Kodak, Lenovo, Manulife, McDonald's, Omega, Panasonic, Samsung and Visa, will also provide financial, product, technical and service support for the staging and operation of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games.

BOCOG official meets Johnson & Johnson official

(BEIJING, Nov. 9) -- Li Binghua, executive vice president of the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG) met with Brian Perkins, vice president of Johnson & Johnson in Beijing on Thursday. The two sides discussed the latter's preliminary plans to join the volunteer program of the 2008 Games.

Li extended appreciation to the guest for the company's sponsorship and support to the Olympiad and its high attention to the volunteer program and willingness to cooperate with BOCOG. He hoped the company to continue discussions with concerned departments of BOCOG to explore possible areas, projects and specific segments of cooperation.

Perkins said the Olympics not only are a grand gathering of the athletes, but also of the volunteers. His company can use its resources to engage in volunteer training in such areas as the dissemination of medical knowledge and first aid. Johnson & Johnson is very happy to have the opportunity to join the volunteer program and make contribution to it, he said.

BOCOG official meets Japanese guests

(BEIJING, Nov. 9) -- Liu Jingmin, vice mayor of Beijing and executive vice president of the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG) met with a delegation led by Hirayama Ikuo, head of Japan-China Friendship Association.

The delegation with former chief cabinet secretary Hiromu Nonaka as consultant, received a warm welcome from Liu, who appreciated Japan's support and help extended to Beijing during its bid and preparation for the 2008 Olympic Games. He believed that the staging of the Olympiad will further promote exchange and friendship between China and Japan.

He briefed the guests on the Olympic preparations including the progress of venue construction and Olympic cultural activities.

The guests thanked Liu for the briefing. Deeply impressed by Olympic venues now under construction, Hiromu Nonaka said he will continue support the Beijing Games.

Hirayama Ikuo spoke highly of the architectural art of the main Olympic stadium □ the National Stadium, or known as "the Bird's Nest," through which he can foresee a successful Olympiad, he said, expressing readiness to organize more social activities to support the event.

Olympic Review features 'the Beijing effect'

Will the Olympic Games change China, or will China change the Olympic Games, ask Dr. Susan Brownell, in the first article of Olympic Review's new series of Olympic research.

China's desire to host the Olympic Games is nearly as old as the modern Games themselves. Around 1907, the Chinese YMCA began a campaign to stir up patriotism by asking, "When will China be able to invite all the world to Peking for an International Olympic contest...?"

One hundred years later, at the eighth evening hour of the eighth day of the eighth month of the year 2008, the Opening Ceremony for the Beijing Olympic Games will begin (eight is a lucky number in Chinese culture, symbolising prosperity and development). The Olympic Games will be hosted by the least Westernised nation in the world to yet host them, the heart of Far Eastern civilisation, the most populous nation in the world. It will be only the third time the Olympic Summer Games have been held outside the Western hemisphere - after Tokyo 1964 and Seoul 1988 - and it will be the greatest-ever meeting of East and West in peacetime.

It will mark a pivotal moment when the Olympic Movement begins to attain an unprecedented universalism, which is expressed in the slogan "One World One Dream".

Surely this should be a moment to celebrate the global culture of the 21st century. But Beijing's bid was met with hostility in some quarters among Western politicians, media, human rights groups, and even some everyday people. When Beijing won the bid and it was shown live on Chinese television, tens of thousands of people took to the streets to celebrate, and the optimism about the Olympic Games and the future of China becomes more fervent as the Games draw near.

So why wasn't there widespread celebration in the West? People in the developed Western countries seem fixated on the question of whether the Olympic Games will change China. Will they improve China's human rights record? Will they open China up more to the outside world? Will they bring democracy to China?

Can the Olympic Games really bring about social change?

We still lack a good scientific understanding of the Olympic Movement as a social movement capable of effecting social change. Pierre de Coubertin had a vision that still shapes the Olympic Movement today, but in this age of science people expect concrete proof that a vision is being carried out. Beijing will be the first host city to produce a full Olympic Games Global Impact (OGGI) report. This is an important step, but OGGI will not assess the cultural fields that might be most interesting for the Chinese Olympic Games. For example, it will not measure the effects on cultural heritage - such as the preservation of culture to enrich the Olympic cultural programme versus the destruction of historical sites for new construction, the growth of traditional sports versus their replacement by Olympic sports, or the effect of the Olympic Games on traditional cultural beliefs.

The greatest legacy of the Beijing Games will be a largely intangible one - its human and cultural legacy. This goal is expressed in one of the three themes for the Olympic Games, Ren Wen Ao Yun, which has been translated into English as the "humanistic" or "people's" Games. Hosting the Olympic Games will require China to "link up with international standards," accelerating the process that already began over 100 years ago. The changes that occur will not be those forced upon China by others, but will be those that China voluntarily seeks out so that it may play a key role in the global society of the 21st century.

Will the Olympic Games change China?

Confucian tradition holds a strong faith in education as a means for creating a harmonious society. One of the main ways in which the "people's" Games will be realised is through Olympic Education on a scale never seen before. There are academic and professional conferences, textbooks and courses for public schools and universities, educational television and radio shows, magazine and newspaper essays, internet training, and more. BOCOG and Olympic scholars see the enthusiasm of volunteers as an opportunity to improve the public educational level and morality with education in Olympic history and values, traditional Chinese culture, Beijing history, public etiquette, international customs, foreign languages, and lifesaving first-aid skills. Currently 100,000 volunteers are slated to receive training, and BOCOG is considering multiplying that number several times. Because of the importance of foreign language skills and the goal of shaping the next generation, most of the volunteers will be college students.

This is indeed a way in which "Olympism with Chinese characteristics" will be promulgated throughout China.

Will China change the Olympic Games?

People are talking about the Olympic Games as an opportunity for China to learn knowledge from the West that will benefit China's development. They are not paying as much attention to the question of whether China can teach anything to the West. Likewise, OGGI will assess the impact of the Olympic Games on China and not China's impact on the Olympic Games. Although Chinese people believe that the result of the Games will be a "combination of East and West," if the Olympic Games are only a oneway process in which China learns from the West, then the cultural exchange will not be truly mutual.

The second goal of the "humanistic Olympic Games" is to display Chinese culture to the world and propel the Olympic Movement to become a truly multicultural, global cultural system. But it is not easy for a non-Western nation, even one with such a strong cultural heritage as China, to propel the Olympic Movement to become multicultural.

Actually, there is a great deal that Chinese culture could contribute to Olympism, such as the search for world peace or Da Tong, "the Great Harmony;" respect for human and national dignity; he er bu tong, "harmony despite differences;" and Tian Ren He Yi, "humans and nature as one." These philosophies will be expressed in the Chinese hospitality toward guest nations, the traditional sport of Wushu, the layout of the Olympic Green along the north-south axis of Beijing according to the principles of Fengshui (geomancy), and in other ways.

Are we ready?

The Chinese slogan for Beijing's bid, Xin Beijing, Xin Aoyun, "New Beijing, New Olympic Games," was translated into English as "New Beijing, Great Olympic Games." It was felt that the rest of the world might not understand how China could create a "new" Olympic Games. China hopes that it will change the Olympic Games, but is the West really open to that possibility? Are we truly ready for "One World One Dream"?

About the author

Dr. Susan Brownell is Associate Professor and Joint Chair, Departments of Anthropology and Foreign Languages, University of Missouri-St. Louis, U.S. She first went to China as a university student in 1985, and won the gold medal in the heptathlon in the 1986 Chinese College Games.