

September 16, 2019

Dr. Thomas Bach
President
International Olympic Committee
Château de Vidy
1007 Lausanne, Switzerland

Dear Dr. Bach,

Re: Climate emergency threatens Tokyo 2020 Olympics and requires strong IOC action

We, the undersigned 29 organizations from 15 countries, are deeply concerned about the escalating climate crisis and urge you to use your platform as President of the International Olympic Committee to encourage Olympic host cities and governments, such as Japan, to take urgent action to address this crisis. The climate emergency we are in is threatening global health and safety, undermining livelihoods and food supplies and disrupting economies. This crisis is also now endangering the long-term viability of the Olympic Games.

We are alarmed by the intense heatwaves which have wracked Japan for the last two summers and threaten the health and safety of thousands of workers, as well as hundreds of thousands of athletes and fans who will attend next year's Tokyo Olympics. This July, the same month when the Olympics will kick off next year, sweltering heatwaves hospitalized tens of thousands and killed at least 50 people in Japan, including a worker at an Olympic construction site.¹ During July 2018, intense heatwaves killed more than a thousand people in Japan as temperatures soared to a record-breaking high of 106°F (41°C). According to research by the Japan Meteorological Agency, the heatwave "would never have happened without anthropogenic global warming."²

While we recognize the IOC's efforts to promote sustainability through the Agenda 2020 platform and efforts by Tokyo 2020 Olympics officials to reduce the carbon footprint of the Olympic Games, these efforts are insufficient. Heatwaves and climate instability will continue to worsen until governments stop building new fossil fuel infrastructure, implement a managed decline of fossil fuel production and transition their economies to clean energy sources, as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicates ambitious action is needed to confront the threat of climate change.

The Japanese government's continuing development of new coal power plants undermines global efforts to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, contravenes UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's call to stop building coal plants after 2020 and far outweighs Tokyo 2020

¹ "[Tokyo Olympics construction worker dies from suspected heatstroke.](#)" *The Guardian*, August 8, 2019.

² "[Japan's deadly 2018 heatwave 'could not have happened without climate change.'](#)" Carbon Brief, May 30, 2019.

initiatives to reduce carbon emissions during next year's event. Just outside the Tokyo 2020 Olympics venues, a new 1,300 MW coal plant in Yokosuka is slated for construction. In 2020, when the world's eyes focus on Tokyo, four new coal-fired power plants are expected to begin operation in Japan. According to IPCC models, none of these projects can go forward for if average global temperature increases are to be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Internationally, the Japanese government spends \$5 billion a year supporting coal mining and coal power production in other countries. In the past few months, the Japanese government has approved \$2.5 billion in loans for the Matarbari coal plant in Bangladesh and for the Van Phong 1 coal plant in Vietnam, which Greenpeace estimates will lead to 2,970 premature deaths due to air pollution.³ Japan is locking in decades of carbon emissions we cannot afford.

Equally troubling, three of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Gold Sponsors are major backers of coal. Japanese megabanks Mizuho and SMBC are the world's largest lenders to coal developers globally and are the biggest lenders and underwriters to coal developers in Japan.⁴⁵ Olympic sponsor Tokio Marine is one of the world's leading power and energy sector insurance companies and has recently come under fire for its financial support of coal projects.

We urge the IOC to use its elevated global platform and relationships with host-country governments to take the following actions to address the climate crisis.

- The IOC should take strong measures to ensure the health and safety of athletes, fans and workers, and work with host countries to ensure the long term viability of the Summer and Winter Olympics by addressing the root cause of the climate crisis: continued fossil fuel development.
- When the IOC chooses a city to host the Olympic Games, such as Tokyo, it should consider the level of actions host city candidates and national governments have taken to address the climate crisis.
- The IOC should work with Olympics organizers and host national Olympic committees to only approve corporate sponsors which have taken aggressive action to combat the climate crisis. Selecting host cities and sponsors which are exacerbating the climate crisis undermines the credibility of the IOC's stated commitment to sustainability.
- With regards to the upcoming Tokyo Olympics, we encourage you to meet with Japanese officials and the leaders of Mizuho, SMBC and Tokio Marine and encourage them to use their prominent role as hosts and sponsors of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics to take meaningful action on climate and end their support for coal.

³ ["A Deadly Double Standard: How Japan's Financing of Highly Polluting Overseas Coal Plants Endangers Public Health,"](#) Greenpeace, August 2019. The report estimates 99 annual premature deaths from Van Phong 1, which over an average 30-year coal plant lifespan totals 2,970 premature deaths.

⁴ [Coal plant developers: 2018 research analysis,](#) BankTrack.

⁵ [Banking on Climate Change 2019,](#) Rainforest Action Network.

We hope you will take these steps to ensure the viability of future Olympics and the health and welfare of communities in Japan and around the world.

Thank you for your time. We look forward to your reply. Please direct any correspondence or questions to susanne@priceofoil.org.

Sincerely,

Susanne Wong
Oil Change International

This letter is endorsed by 29 organizations from 15 countries. Please see the following page for endorsements.

Cc: Prime Minister Shinzo Abe
Mr. Yasuhiro Yamashita, Japan National Olympic Committee President
Mr. Yoshiro Mori, Tokyo 2020 President
Mr. Koji Fujiwara, Mizuho Bank President and CEO
Mr. Makoto Takashima, President and Chief Executive Officer, Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation
Mr. Tsuyoshi Nagano, Tokio Marine Holdings CEO

