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The Management of Big Games

Introduction

I think it would not require much of an effort to generate a consensus that the Olympic Games are “big” Games. Their duration alone, at 17 days, tends to be exceeded only by such team sport events as football, rugby and specialized events such as the Tour de France and the America’s Cup. Add to duration, however, the number of events, the number of athletes, and their concentration in or near a single city, and they become even bigger. Then, to top off all this, add the size of the global audience and the active involvement of more than 200 countries, the communication of the Games on several media platforms, the involvement of sponsors, the need to provide security and the creation of infrastructure, and the whole package becomes “big” and perhaps even “huge.”

The size of the Games has always been a concern. In my youth, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) was fixated on the size of the Games and was perpetually concerned about them becoming too big. Efforts were constantly made to restrict the number of events and the number of entries in each event. As an example, in the sport of swimming, in which I competed, as late as 1960, there were only three men’s freestyle events (100, 400 and 1,500 metres), one event each in backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly (200 metres) and one relay (4 x 100 medley). A maximum of two competitors per country (per “delegation” in Olympic parlance) was permitted in each individual event. The programme has doubled since then.

The reasons for this concern about size were not always clear and often not fully transparent. In the pre-global television era, especially with low Olympic television rights fees, the international federations (IFs) were often jealous about maintaining the importance of their world championships and other events, and did not want the Olympic program to impinge too much on their larger programs. The IOC may well have been concerned about the costs of organizing a larger program, although this would have been a less defensible factor if additional events could have been accommodated within the existing facilities. These concerns may have extended to the possibility that many proposed new events were so similar to existing events that athletes could win multiple medals in the same sport, such as occurred in the Munich swimming competition in 1972 with Mark Spitz’s 7 gold medals, topped 40 years later by Michael Phelps’ 8 gold medals.

Even the Olympic Winter Games can now safely be regarded as “big.” For the Winter Games, once an event that could be held in relatively small alpine regions, continued expansion of the program and the extension of these Games to the same 17 days of competitions as for the

Summer Games have created a new dynamic. Over and above a dramatically expanded program, more robust participation by women (including in team sports), has led to increasingly larger numbers of athletes. Winter Games host cities have changed, especially since the Albertville and Lillehammer Games of 1992 and 1994, to big-city Games, essentially with excursions to alpine areas for the skiing and biathlon competitions, leaving many of the arena sports to be contested in the larger cities, starting with Nagano in 1998. The upcoming choice of the host city for the 2022 Olympic Winter Games, between Almaty and Beijing, puts this issue in a very clear focus. New events have been added to provide more programming for the full 17 days and several of the new events and disciplines have been added in a conscious effort to encourage the youth of the world to maintain a connection with the Games. In absolute numbers, however, notwithstanding the higher levels of technical support personnel required at Winter Games, they remain a fraction of the size of the Summer Games.

The Shift to Big Games

The paradigm shift toward big Games had already begun during the presidency of Lord Killanin, especially as television rights for the Games began to appreciate, with significant increases for Moscow in 1980 over the 1976 figures (albeit a somewhat stillborn success, given the extensive U.S.-led boycott) and even more for Los Angeles in 1984, a contract executed during Killanin's latter years, but under the protocols of the day, negotiated by the Organizing Committee, not the IOC. Those negotiating protocols were soon changed by his successor, Juan Antonio Samaranch, who realized the importance of television, not only financially, but as the major window on the world for the Olympic Movement. The changes in negotiating responsibilities were bitterly resisted by the Games Organizing Committees (which regarded Olympic television rights as "theirs" and any portion paid to - or extracted by - the IOC as effective appropriation of their property), but the changes occurred nevertheless by stages, first to "joint" negotiations for the 1988 Games, then to negotiations "in consultation with" the Organizing Committees for the 1992 Games and, thereafter, by the IOC alone. To illustrate the dramatic increases, the world television rights for the Summer Games increased in the 20-year period between Montreal in 1976 and Atlanta in 1996 from \$35 million to \$935 million, a figure which has in turn doubled since 1996.

The Samaranch era (1980 - 2001) was one of dramatic expansion in the size and scope of the Games, expansion of the role of the IOC itself, not only in the field of world politics (starting with resolution of the Two Chinas conundrum, moving to the delicate negotiations regarding the DPRK proposal to co-host the 1988 Games awarded to Seoul, finding a solution for the participation of athletes from the former republic of Yugoslavia in 1992, the Commonwealth of Independent States as the former Soviet Union began to unravel, and the reintegration of South Africa into the Olympic Movement), but also within the Olympic Movement itself, as IFs began to depend more and more on IOC-based funding, and in its direct relations with the business world, as the TOP Program was conceived and delivered as an international marketing program.

IFs regularly overexposed their sports with a plethora of ever-increasingly irrelevant and uninteresting programming, having less and less importance and, therefore, diminished commercial value. The Olympic Games, reflecting the IOC's position of less-is-more, became more and more important, both as to share of mind for the world and as the principal platform for television and other sponsors, on which they could reach audiences of potential consumers measured in billions. This dominance accentuated the growth in size and scope of the Games themselves. The number of sports, disciplines and events continued to grow, as did the number of countries participating in the Games. After the major boycott of the Moscow Games in 1980, there were two lesser boycotts in 1984 and 1988, by the end of which political authorities had learned that the only suffering resulting from their political boycotts was by their own athletes, not the targeted country, and Olympic boycotts are now merely unfortunate footnotes to history.

Distribution formulae regarding television revenues led to increasing pressures from IFs, which believed that the number of spectators was an important factor in the determination of each IF's share of those revenues. The IFs had a marked tendency to demand larger and larger venues, as a basis for requesting that a greater share of the portion of television rights should be allocated to their sport. Pressures of this nature occurred as early as the bidding stages for the Games, since the "opinions" of the IFs were sought by the IOC with respect to the organization of their sports. IFs were not subtle about wanting large facilities and many, if not most, bidding cities were insecure enough to capitulate to the demands. The end result was a number of facilities that may have been filled once, for the finals of a particular event, but never again, and that required to be maintained, subsequent to the Games, at increased costs to the eventual hosts. I will speak of the IOC's solution to this form of conduct later.

One management technique that the IOC discovered early in the process of allocating television revenues among IFs was to fix the global amount available to the IFs collectively, but to require the IFs to agree amongst themselves as to how the money would be divided. There was no upside, and all downside, were the IOC to assume the responsibility of ranking the sports. It was far better to have the collectivity of IFs pleased with the increasing amounts directed at the IFs by the IOC, and to let them fight amongst themselves for the appropriate shares.

Management Challenges for Big Games

It has often been noted in the media that, generally, the only amateurs left in the Olympic Movement are the Games organizers. Cynical as this may be, there are nevertheless elements of truth in the observation. In almost all cases the organizers are engaged in the preparation and operation of their first and, likely, only Games. The project facing them is huge, complex, daunting, time sensitive and must, in the end, function perfectly. Competitors cannot be asked to re-run the 100 metres or the downhill alpine event because the timing system failed. Athletes and officials must be assured that they will arrive at the competition venues in time for their events. The same is true for spectators. The Games are scheduled to begin at 8:00 p.m. on the specified Friday of the Opening Ceremony - not 8:05 p.m., or the following day.

The organizing committees (OCOGs) need assistance in identifying all of the necessary elements and setting the appropriate timelines for engagement. What should be accomplished by Opening Ceremony minus 5 years, minus 4 years, minus 3 years, and so on? How can the IOC, as the body which awards the Games, help the management process to ensure that the eventual delivery of the Games will meet the expectations of all stakeholders?

Franchise Parallels

Seen from some perspectives, there are, in the organization of Olympic Games, many factors common to business franchises. In such a model, the IOC, as the franchisor, has certain matters that are important to it and which must be part of each Games: focus on athletes, first class venues to provide the athletes with the best possibilities for their on-field performances, Look of the Games, commercial advertising-free competition venues, suitable working conditions for the media, security and a host of other considerations to be absorbed and dealt with by the OCOG. Because these are common to each edition of the Games, the IOC has built up considerable experience, which it is in a position to share with host cities. There are regular and ongoing contacts between the IOC and the OCOGs for purposes of sharing such knowledge and experience. This will include what to do, as well as what not to do. The flavour of each Games will, of course, differ as a result of the cultural context of the particular host countries, but the basic organizational models will be more or less constant. Outcomes from the sharing of experience include the quality of Games expected by the IOC and the savings of millions of dollars by the OCOGs, which do not have to experiment or head in the direction of potential dead-ends.

New Approaches to Olympic Candidacies

Under the changes adopted in 2014 as part of Olympic Agenda 2020, the sharing of experience will now commence even prior to the designation of host cities, as applicant and candidate cities can explore various scenarios with the IOC, a process that is certainly more flexible and user-friendly than the former system of bidding without the benefit of such discussions. While it is perhaps too early to judge the degree of substantive improvements that will result, the process will inevitably become more of a collaborative search for tailor-made solutions in the different circumstances of each potential host city than a non-negotiable, all-or-nothing, bid against a static set of IOC-designed criteria. If there may have been an undue focus prior to Olympic Agenda 2020 on the compactness of Games, there can be a risk of regarding compactness as a disadvantage, compared with geographically expanded Games, that may detract unduly from the philosophical foundation of unity of time and pace as a hallmark of Olympic Games. If the only “togetherness” of the Games occurs in broadcasting control rooms, the essential specialness of the Games could be lost. Few would wish the Olympic Games to shrink to the level of the made-for-television Goodwill Games.

Avoiding the White Elephants

One aspect of the management of big Games is to ensure that they do not become too big, particularly with respect to the construction of sports facilities, often, as noted above, under the pressure of IFs seeking larger shares of television revenues. The IOC constantly urges candidate cities not to construct facilities that will have no after-use once the Games have finished. A dozen or so years ago, I chaired a Commission for the Study of the Olympic Games, the object of which was to find means of reducing both the costs of the Games and the complexity of their organization. Our report was approved by the IOC Session in 2003 and contained suggestions that could easily result in tens, even hundreds, of millions of dollars of reduced costs for the host cities. Much of the difficulties leading to excess costs had tended to arise from the existence of several “silos” within the OCOGs, each concerned only with its own part of the Games puzzle, and not with the overall or integrated challenge of organizing the best possible Games. Ticketing did not speak to transportation, marketing did not speak with the sports department, protocol did not speak with venue management; NOC concerns were not shared with those responsible for IF relations. The list was all but endless.

Creating Coordination Commissions

The first small step in trying to establish a focus on the big picture began in relation to the 1996 Games in Atlanta. Prior to those Games, there were separate Commissions or working groups, one from the IOC, one from the IFs and one from the NOCs, each of which dealt with the OCOGs for purposes of ensuring that their needs in relation to the Games were properly fulfilled. This process multiplied the demands on the time and attention of the OCOG and reinforced the silo mentality within the OCOG. The change adopted with respect to the Atlanta Games was to have a single Coordination Commission, which included representation of the IOC, the IFs, the NOCs, Olympic athletes and some outside experts. Conceptually, it was a major improvement, which permitted all of the Olympic stakeholders to bring their concerns forward and which gave each stakeholder a much better appreciation of the needs of the others, as well as the complexities of Games organization.

Its initial effectiveness was somewhat limited by the fact that the Coordination Commission had no power to make any decisions. It could only suggest or recommend and the Atlanta OCOG was highly resistant to outside advice. I was the Chairman of that Coordination Commission and, following the Games, made a number of recommendations to the IOC for future Commissions, including the authority to require the OCOG to implement any necessary changes regarding its preparations. Any major disputes could be settled by the IOC Executive Board. These improvements have greatly enhanced the ability of the IOC to monitor progress and to identify possible problem areas before they become significant. If there is a residual shortcoming, it is that current Coordination Commissions have a tendency to be more diffident than is necessary and OCOGs know, based on the experience of other OCOGs, that the Commissions will seldom insist on measures that the OCOG resists.

Managing the Competitions

Management of the Olympic sports competitions falls essentially within the competence of the IFs, who assume the responsibility for management of their particular sports. Looked at, one-by-one, each IF has many years of experience in the organization of high performance competitions and the Olympic competitions are, for them, simply another competition. The Olympic Games provide an opportunity for officials in the host country to gain additional high level experience that might not otherwise have been otherwise.

The various IFs determine how athletes and teams may qualify for the Games (qualification competitions and minimum performance standards) and the particular format of the Olympic competitions so that all Olympic events can fit within the period of the Games. The IOC eventually moved off its initial philosophy that restricted Olympic eligibility to “amateur” athletes and now accepts for purposes of Games participation, all athletes who are eligible to participate in world championships under the jurisdiction of the IF. There can be occasional difficulties in moving from established leagues and other competitions in which the nationality of competitors is not a factor (e.g., football, ice hockey, tennis, etc.) to the selection of national teams for purposes of the Games, as well as occasional static resulting from NOC selection of athletes that may follow a different ranking from those established by the IF.

There is a constant tendency for the number of athletes at the Games to increase and, if there is a major existing management concern, this must be identified as one of the most acute. In recent years, the IOC-determined maximum number of athletes has often been exceeded. The expansion of the women’s sport program will undoubtedly continue and it will be difficult to attempt to justify restricted classes, weights and other impediments to full participation by women. It is too soon to gauge the impact of the Olympic Agenda 2020 change of the Olympic program from a sport-based to an event-based calculation. It may be that the IOC will have to work with some IFs to see whether the number of athletes involved, as well as the organizational costs and security concerns of events that take place outside the Olympic “bubble” might lead to discontinuance of some events and a reduction of the number of Olympic athletes. It may also be necessary to establish firm quotas for sports, both as to the maximum number of athletes and as to the maximum number of events in the sport.

From a management perspective, these are perfectly feasible solutions, however difficult it may be, from a sports-political perspective, to achieve them. Host cities and OCOGs might well welcome certain of the possible alternatives.

Managing the Olympic Revenues

As the Games become larger and more complex, it becomes increasingly important to manage the financial resources involved. Apart from the efforts described earlier to discourage host cities from building unnecessarily large facilities and permanent facilities that will have no legacy value or after-use once the Games have finished, the IOC is not in a position to manage expenditure and infrastructure in the host country. On the other hand, its growing

responsibility to its own stakeholders and to the OCOGs requires careful management of Olympic-related financial resources.

First and foremost are the television revenues, now negotiated, as already indicated, by the IOC. These revenues are shared with the OCOGs, the IFs and the NOCs, the latter through the IOC program of Olympic Solidarity, the resources of which are allocated on a continental basis. "Television revenues" has become something of a dated misnomer, since the audio-visual signals of the Games are now distributed across a number of technological platforms, including classic free-to-air television, cable, mobile and hand-held devices. While the distribution models for such interactive devices have been successfully achieved, some of the revenue models are still works in progress, as the world adapts to the new communications realities. The main management objective for the IOC is to occupy the field. The revenue models are regarded as less important than making the Olympics available to the broadest possible global audience.

Next in importance is sponsorship. This field was originally taken up by the IOC to counterbalance its almost total previous reliance on television revenues. A secondary aspect of marketing soon became the sharing of such revenues, through the international marketing program named TOP - The Olympic Program. The most innovative features of TOP included combining the marketing rights from the OCOGs, the NOCs and the IOC into a single one-stop-shopping package, the limitation of the TOP program to a restricted number of international product and service categories, and the ability to ensure that even those NOCs where markets are undeveloped could share in the revenues of the program. Efforts were made to attract the IFs to the program, but they were unwilling to contribute any marketing rights, so the program proceeded without their involvement. Management challenges for the IOC included ensuring that sponsors understood the nature of the rights granted and how best to promote their association with the Olympic Movement, protection of the rights granted to sponsors, division of the revenues from the program, and the need to ensure that the Olympic parties delivered value to the sponsors. Within the Olympic Movement, managing the fact that the program was based on the commercial values of the respective economies, as opposed to success on the field of play was particularly challenging, especially since the program began before the emergence of the BRIC countries as major economies. Early versions of the program involved the use of marketing agencies, first, ISL, an independent agency, and later Meridian Management, owned by the IOC, but eventually, the IOC took the whole program in-house. Sponsors have, generally, been quite loyal to the program, which speaks to its perceived value, and those who have left have tended to do so in response to dramatic changes in their businesses (e.g., Kodak, Xerox, IBM) or ownership (e.g., John Hancock).

Managing Working Conditions for the Media

The vast majority of people who experience an Olympic Games do so through television and other media, both electronic and written. This means that, in addition to making the Olympic experience as enjoyable as possible for ticket purchasers, the IOC has to ensure that the media are provided with the necessary working conditions to enable them to do their jobs.

OCOGs are expected to provide media centres for that purpose – for the press agencies and journalists from the many countries whose athletes will be participating in the Games. These centres must enable journalists to connect into the results systems, the audio-visual transmissions and to be able to transmit their own coverage as efficiently as possible. Interview facilities and press conference rooms must be available and schedulable. The international agencies are easily identifiable and generally experienced. Journalists from around the world are far more difficult to accredit and to manage. Experience has shown that it is usually best to leave identification of the best journalists in each country to the country (normally through the NOC), to avoid “tourist” journalists.

Managing the Value of Broadcast Rights

Until the 2010 Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver, one of the principal challenges for each OCOG was to provide an International Broadcast Centre, as well as a host broadcast function, charged with delivering top-level basic coverage of each heat, game, final and ceremony, which could be used by the rights-holding broadcasters, to provide the necessary context for their unilateral coverages. The stakes were enormous, given the massive rights fees paid by broadcasters and obligations they assumed with their advertisers. This presented a major management issue for the IOC, especially given its desire to ensure that billions of viewers would see first class coverage of the Games, plus its commitment in principle to move the hosting of the Games to many countries around the world.

The combination of those factors led to the creation of Olympic Broadcasting Services (OBS), a company beneficially owned by the IOC, whose mandate is to relieve the OCOGs from the responsibility of producing the basic coverage of the Games, and to produce that coverage itself, making it available to the various rights-holding broadcasters. The IOC realized that it was unrealistic to expect that each host country would have the sophisticated broadcast infrastructure and experience to deliver the high quality production anticipated by broadcasters, audiences and sponsors. The solution, to protect the value of the Games, was for the IOC to ensure that it delivered the “product” itself, through OBS. This has been a very successful undertaking, with the Games in Vancouver, London and Sochi broadcast to everyone’s satisfaction, especially to the satisfaction of the rights-holders. The quality of OBS’s work is so high that rights-holding broadcasters can rely on it to an increasing extent, which translates into lower production costs for them. Many technical aspects, such as editing, sound mixing, commentating can even be done in the broadcasters’ home studios, thus saving on transportation, accommodation, import and export complications regarding equipment brought into the host country, and duplication of existing facilities.

Managing Reputational Risks

Management of reputational risks associated with mega events has assumed greater share of mind in recent years. The IOC had its problems in this area in relation to the selection of Salt Lake City as the host of the 2002 Olympic Winter Games. While nothing criminal was

ever alleged with respect to IOC members, it was clear that several had acted unacceptably and the reputation of the IOC was seriously compromised. The IOC acted quickly to accept its responsibility, expelled or forced the resignation of several members, cancelled visits by members to candidate cities, adopted a Code of Ethics, established an Ethics Commission with a majority of outside members, opened its Sessions to the media and the public, published audited financial statements, adopted term limits for members, introduced the concept of active Olympic athletes as IOC members and instituted a screening process for new members. The IOC, after the initial period of difficulty, is now seen as an example of an international organization operating with best practices of governance.

A far more serious governance problem can now be seen in relation to conduct within FIFA. The actions that have been alleged in legal proceedings to date are not simply limited to conduct that may impinge on the reputation of FIFA, but extend to criminal actions, including bribery corruption and money laundering. Thus far, the organization has shown no signs of being able to deal constructively with the situation and the recently-announced resignation of its president, only days after his re-election, can only de-stabilize matters even further. Among other concerns, the awarding of its World Cup may appear to have been seriously compromised, to the point that many are speculating that changes to decisions already taken may be required. At the very least, significant changes in governance will be essential.

A parallel comparison, at least to date, would be that FIFA is the Exxon Valdez compared with the IOC's Tylenol response to the crisis.

Management of a Changing Sport Environment

An emerging management problem for the IOC in relation to Big Games comes from changes in the way that sports events (and many other aspects of modern society) are perceived by the viewing public. Sport organizations are notorious for being change-adverse. What may be fascinating for the small minority of those who practice a sport can be incomprehensible to a non-expert spectator. Games and matches often take far longer to finish than most spectators are willing to absorb. Dependence on television and other electronic media requires that events begin when scheduled and finish within the broadcast period allocated to the event. Perhaps the greatest risk is that audiences find the event to be boring, with the result that they do not even bother to watch it. That can become the death-knell to a sport that depends on paying audiences, whether as seat-warming, paying, spectators or television viewers willing to pay somewhat extra for the goods or services of a presenting sponsor in order to watch. The metrics for measurement are available and the market-driven outcomes can be brutal. Sports are driven to making their events more comprehensible, exciting and shorter in duration.

An international rugby tournament or championship may take a month to complete. Cricket matches can last for days. Triathlon can require the better part of an entire day. Sailing is all but impossible for a non-sailor to understand and is often inaccessible. Archery, with dozens of archers shooting at target butts is devoid of interest. Modern pentathlon, a sort of mutual fund of different sports, took forever to unfold and required crowds to move to a series

of discrete venues. Consider some responses to the indisputable loss of audience. Rugby has developed rugby sevens, a discipline that is fast-moving, exciting and short. Matches can be scheduled at 30-minute intervals. The IOC has added the discipline to the Games of 2016 and 2020. It is likely to prove immensely popular, as well as to open up medal possibilities for a number of small countries that might not otherwise expect such results. Sailing has responded by removing some of the big, expensive, classes in favour of board surfing and Laser boats and now tries to have at least some events where they can be watched from shore. This is not always possible, but it reflects a change of attitude within a sport that was normally considered as somewhat aristocratic. Modern pentathlon has drastically reduced its requirements and can now run its entire program in a single day. Triathlon has developed an Olympic version of its traditional event, which can be completed in approximately 2 hours. Cricket has a limited overs format, which does not last for days. Archery has a *mano-à-mano* format that is exciting and entertaining, as well as subject to time limitations for each contest. All sports need to be alert to the new society and the challenges that can have severe adverse impacts on them. Wrapping a sport in the cloak of tradition may turn the cloak into a shroud.

For the IOC, the management issue is to ensure that sports at risk, particularly Olympic risk, both understand that there is risk and that those who fail or refuse to evolve may disappear from the Olympic program. It is committed to review the outcomes after each Olympic Games, although such review has been rather perfunctory thus far and it has been taken hostage by the IFs, who have declared that some 25 sports (on the Summer Games program) are “core” sports – a declaration that is manifestly wrong. One hopes that the IOC, under new leadership, will make a more vigorous appraisal of the Olympic program. After all, the IOC depends on a full program of sports that are visually appealing and suited to the electronic age. It was interesting, when the IOC undertook its first formal review of the Olympic program in 2005, following the Athens Games of 2004, in which the IOC members voted, sport by sport, on whether the sport should remain on the Olympic program, the IFs petitioned that the results should be kept secret and not be made public. Each IF was allowed to know, privately, how many votes it received, but the public and even the IOC members who voted, were not permitted to know the results (other than that baseball and softball were eliminated). The reason was that the IFs did not want anyone, especially perhaps their sponsors, to know how close they may have come to elimination. I suspect there might have been many surprises on the part of sports which confidently declared themselves to be “core” sports.

Its other management issue in this area is to continue to encourage the introduction of new events that may relate better to a younger audience. This should not amount to complete capitulation to the flavour of the month and transient interests of youth, but a recognition that someone who relates to the Olympics at an early age is more likely to continue that attachment in later years and that it is easier to maintain an existing connection than to try to make a new one. Half-pipe, arials, snowboard cross and trampoline are examples of this. It will always be an empirical exercise and a continual work in progress, but it is worthy of attention, study and analysis.

Ongoing Management Issues

Management of the Games includes sustainability and best practices. Since the Lillehammer Games in 1994, the IOC has been committed to sustainable development and has made the environment one of the pillars of the Olympic Movement. In addition to commitments to sustainable development, the host city contracts will now include provisions regarding best governance practices and reports on compliance with anti-corruption legislation. New language has been added to the Olympic Charter regarding discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, following the Sochi Games in 2014. Increased involvement of women in the organization of sport has been mandated and concrete steps taken in the recent announcement of the IOC Commissions for 2015. Maintaining productive relationships with governmental authorities, and establishing the legitimate expectations of governments and sports authorities has become a matter of increasing interest to both sides.

It is fair to say, therefore, that Big Games can be managed. They have already been managed. Critical to ongoing management, however, is to be alert to potential changes, to encourage them when appropriate, to maintain an appropriate autonomy when necessary and to ensure that there is, instead of confrontation, enlightened dialogue at all times.