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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2025: TATIANA ARDABYEVA (RUS)

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The International Olympic Committee's theme for International Women's Day 2025 is #SportForAllWomenAndGirls. Why is it important to provide equal opportunities for all women and girls in sports worldwide?

For decades, gender equality issue has been on the world agenda. Sport plays a critical role in shaping both individual lives and society as a whole. This is why the issue of gender equality is an integral part of concerns and responsibilities of the IOC, which systematically and persistently strives for gender equality in the Olympic movement.

In recent years, sport has demonstrated its enormous capacity to propel women and girls' empowerment. It mobilises the global community and speaks to youth, it unites across national barriers and cultural differences. Very importantly, it teaches women and girls teamwork and self-reliance. It has a positive effect on their health, education, leadership development and self-esteem, and builds social connections.

Reflecting on your lifetime involvement in sport, how far do you think the gender equality movement has come, and how far do we still have to go?

For me Modern Pentathlon is a showcase of gender equality. Our men and women have equally participated in the Olympic Games in the course of 25 years (seven Olympic Games), as well as all the other competitions of different levels.

Women's and men's performances are equally popular. The Mixed Relay is another demonstration of gender equality and one of the most impressive competitions for Modern Pentathlon fans. Our girls are very well physically developed, good looking, educated, socially active and, in many cases, they have excellent post sport-careers.

Today we are watching vivid examples of brilliant post-sports career of our famous female athletes: Aya Medany, Laura Asadauskaite, Lori Norwood, Kitty Chiller, Anna Bajan, Lena Schoeneborn among many others.

This does not mean, however, that UIPM should stop its activities in this direction. We still have many challenges regarding gender equality both in sports in different continents and within our organisation, but I am sure that our correct and consistent approach to this topic will show positive results.

As a sports leader, how much are you motivated to show other women and girls that there are pathways in this field?

I am very motivated to encourage capable, active, interested people the pathways in these fields by my example, especially if they are former athletes, convincing them about the important role of women in the sport movement.

What do you see as the main inequalities affecting women and girls in sport at the present time, either in your country or worldwide?

Do you have any suggestions for policies or actions that might address these inequalities?

I combine the two questions and will share my observations. Travelling around and meeting people (in our case women) in different parts of the world, like Middle East countries such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan and United Arab Emirates, you see active, clever, educated women who because of local culture and religion are cut off from some social activities including sport.

I admit that nowadays the governments and sport authorities of these countries started to realise it and they work very hard on involving women in social movements, including sport. This is a positive change but it will take years to overcome this barrier.

In conclusion: the founder of Modern Pentathlon, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, was not a great promoter of women in sport but I am sure that if he observed his beloved Modern Pentathlon of today and saw wonderful young people men and women competing together, demonstrating their outstanding skills to the World, he would be very proud.

On the eve of International Women's Day I wish all UIPM women – athletes, coaches, officials, mothers, daughters, granddaughters, wives, sisters and grandmothers – to be proud of their noble

mission making this world better!

About the author

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