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UN official hails United Kingdom's measures to make Olympics sustainable



UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner (right) beside UK Secretary of State Caroline Spelman at the Olympic Park in London. Photo: UNEP

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A senior United Nations official today praised the measures taken by the United Kingdom to ensure that the London Summer Olympic Games are environmentally sustainable.

“London’s clean-up of an old industrial site; the restoration of flows and habitat on the River Lea; the greening of supply chains; the low energy linked with the design and construction of the stadium, including utilizing old gas pipes for the facility’s Olympic ring; and the use of temporary structures to reduce emissions are among the actions that can assist in inspiring the organizers of the Rio 2016 games and beyond,” said Achim Steiner.

Mr. Steiner is the Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), which has been cooperating with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) since the mid-1990s so that host cities of the global sporting event strive to put measure in place that protect the environment and makes smart use of their resources.

“Every Olympic Games represents unique challenges and opportunities in terms of raising the bar of the third pillar of Olympism – namely the environment – and London is no exception,” Mr. Steiner [said](#) during a visit to the Olympic Park on the eve of the Games’ inauguration.

Some of the measures taken by the London Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games to make the event sustainable include the creation of the Olympic Park on a once-contaminated industrial land, the recycling of over 98 per cent of waste during the construction of the Park and the commitment to do the same on the demolition phase.

It has also committed to the delivery of public transport targeting one million extra walking and cycling journeys in London during the Games, and the use of a sustainability assessment guide developed in part by UNEP.

This is also the first time that a city has committed to measure its carbon footprint over the entire project term.

UNEP has also provided a set of recommendations to the Organizing Committee of the Sochi 2014 Olympic Games in Russia to provide guidance on the integration of environmental considerations in the preparation and staging of the Winter Games and has been invited to assist Rio de Janeiro in its preparations for the 2016 Summer Games.

“We are committed to building a future for everyone where the natural environment is not just protected, but valued as a national asset,” said the UK Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, Caroline Spelman. “We are delighted to have set new standards in sustainable development, and to showcase the expertise and ingenuity of British companies in delivering a green Olympics so warmly welcomed by Mr. Steiner.”

UNEP has a longstanding collaboration with the IOC in the greening of the Games which goes back to Athens 2004, Torino 2006, Beijing 2008 and Vancouver 2010.

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