

Cuba will not give up being a sports giant (COC)



Cuban Olympic Committee Assembly

Havana, January 31 (RHC/JIT)-- The 11th General Assembly of the Cuban Olympic Committee (COC), held over the weekend at the Empresa Batos theater, supported the purpose of raising the Island's results in the Olympic cycle until Paris 2024.

The conclave was chaired by Roberto León Richards, head of the COC, and Osvaldo Vento Montiller, president of Inder. Also in attendance was María Caridad Colón Ruenes, member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), who will be leaving in a few hours for the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games.

The director of Batos, Iskra Corretgé Maceira, welcomed the participants and assured that the entity is at the disposal of the COC and Inder, for which an even closer work for the benefit of the athletes and delegations of the Island is urgent.

Heartfelt messages of greetings were also heard at the beginning of the meeting, sent by Thomas Bach, president of the IOC; Neven Ilic, leader of Panam Sports; and Luis Mejía, head of Centro Caribe Sports (CCS).

The latter devoted more than 10 minutes to extensively discuss the significance of Cuban sport, its historical leadership in the region and globally, as well as the confidence in new successes for the future. He made a special mention of Mijain López's achievement in Tokyo 2020, where he won his fourth crown in a row under the five rings.

A minute of silence paid tribute to the life and work of Higinio Vélez Carrión, president of the Cuban Baseball Federation who passed away in mid-2021 as a result of COVID-19.

Then Leon Richards gave an account of the COC management in 2021, on which he commented on the improvement of the entity, the improvement of its headquarters in the capital's Vedado district; the exchange with athletes, coaches and federation members; and the support provided to the preparation of the delegations for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games and the Cali 2021 Junior Pan American Games.

The executive also explained the exchanges held with the IOC, Panam Sports, CCS and Acno; the follow-up of financial reports and the participation in various virtual meetings.

Richards explained that during Tokyo 2020, 43 activities were carried out with sports leaders and organizations at the global, continental and national levels, and highlighted the participation in the assemblies of Acno, Panam Sports and CCS.

Prominent sports personalities were received during this period, while others were sent letters of congratulations and invitations to sign bilateral agreements, for example with Colombia, Chile, Bolivia and Peru.

Other highlights were the election of Mijain López to receive an Acno award and to join the athletes' commission of the World Anti-Doping Agency.

Ruperto Herrera, secretary general of the COC, discussed the IOC's Olympic solidarity programs and others sponsored by Panam Sports.

At this stage, the COC participated in nine of the 18 programs approved by the IOC and in the three of continental scope. However, access to financial resources was seriously affected by the Economic, Commercial and Financial Blockade imposed by the United States government on our country.

The maximum expression of such siege has been the suspension of the delivery of funding to several athletes endowed with Olympic scholarships, since the COC has not been able to receive direct funding from the IOC since 2019.

Ariel Sainz, vice president of Inder, commented that despite this, work was done for a better understanding of this system of support to athletes, which allows aspiring in 2022 to 16 of the 18 IOC programs and the three of Panam Sports.

Lorenzo Martinez, COC treasurer, detailed the expenses incurred during the year, most of them through foreign operations due to the embargo. The support to the delegations attending Tokyo 2020 and Cali 2021, plus the operation of the entity, demanded expenses of more than half a million dollars.

Gisleydi Sosa, in charge of the COC's international relations, gave an overview of what has been done in this area, highlighting the 161 international positions held by Cubans; the 125 athletes who signed professional contracts in the period; the validity of 57 agreements with national Olympic committees; and the participation in the most important international meetings. Sainz commented to the Assembly on the results obtained in Tokyo 2020 and Cali 2021, valued as satisfactory in the midst of the covid-19, the

global economic crisis and the siege of the U.S. government.

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