

September 28

Tokyo Skytree Supports 'WeThe15' - To commemorate the campaign launch,
Tokyo Skytree illuminated in symbolic purple color together with over 200 global
landmarks

Received a message from Andrew Parsons, President of the IPC, and photographed by
world-famous photographer Leslie Kee

To celebrate the launch of [WeThe15](#) which aspires to be the world's biggest human rights movement representing the world's 1.2 billion persons with disabilities, Andrew Parsons, President of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), spoke with Tokyo Skytree about the importance of this historic global campaign.

Launched on August 19, 2021 ahead of the international sports event for Para athletes, WeThe15 aims to end discrimination towards persons with disabilities and act as a global movement campaigning for disability visibility, accessibility, and inclusion. Spearheaded by the International Paralympic Committee and International Disability Alliance (IDA), WeThe15 brings together the biggest coalition ever of international organizations from the worlds of sport, human rights, policy, business, arts, and entertainment. Together they will work with governments, businesses, and the public over the next decade to initiate change for the world's largest marginalized group who make up 15% of the global population.

Andrew Parsons said the timing was perfect to launch such an ambitious worldwide program. "Sport is a truly universal language, crossing geographic boundaries, cultures and religions. With the global spotlight on Tokyo ahead of the Paralympic Games this is the ideal time to grab the world's attention for this important movement," he said.

"The Covid-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected people with disabilities around the world, so it is even more important for their voices to be heard. The Paralympics is the only truly global sporting event focused on people with disabilities. I believe the stars have aligned in bringing all of these different organizations together at this time with a common purpose," he added.

Acknowledging that subjects like disability and mental health issues are taboo in many parts of the world, Mr. Parsons said one of the biggest challenges will be to engage ordinary people around the world. "While governments have an important role to play, our priority must be to engage ordinary people and help them understand how they can make a difference and not rely purely on governments. Information is key to this process; we need to improve education and awareness and demonstrate how individuals can



make a contribution. We need clear, consistent messages to help educate people. And while we are using sport to shine a spotlight on this issue, it goes far beyond sport as demonstrated by this unique coalition.”

Mr. Parsons emphasized that this is a long-term campaign, initially scheduled for ten years, the organizers have set tangible goals and benchmarks to monitor the progress of the campaign. “We are not going to change the world overnight,” Parsons said. “Sport connects people, it brings people together and it will help to amplify the impact of this campaign.”

While Japan is perceived as a conservative society, according to Mr. Parsons the feedback from people in Japan has been extremely positive. “We know that Japanese people are very proud to host the Games and the Paralympic Games and they are delighted that WeThe15 is being launched here in Tokyo at the same time.”

Tokyo Skytree is fully supporting the launch of WeThe15 and along with 200 global landmarks, Tokyo Skytree was illuminated in purple lights, the internationally recognized color of the movement, to celebrate the launch of the campaign. Tokyo Skytree Supports ‘WeThe15’.

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“We are thrilled that Tokyo Skytree is involved with this campaign. The Wish Ribbon initiative is an incredible idea, combining arts and aesthetics. It has similar goals for wanting a better more inclusive world and we love the concept, the exciting visuals and the message that a better more beautiful world has to include everybody. Getting people to express their wishes and be part of something bigger aligns perfectly with the goals of WeThe15,” Mr. Parsons said.

The organization has established clear benchmarks and goals to measure the success of the campaign. It includes targets such as employment levels, mobility access, legislative protections and tax benefits on assisted technology developments. A series of studies are being conducted for the campaign to monitor and measure its success. The plans also include the possibility of a ‘version 2’ once the campaign ends, but it may not be necessary if good progress is achieved.

“At the end of 10 years I would like to see global positive change, a more inclusive society made for all by all. I hope that we can look back and see that governments played their part, civil society played its part and businesses played their part in achieving significant change.”

Celebrated international photographer and director, Leslie Kee, photographed Mr. Parsons with a special purple ribbon inscribed with his wishes for the success of the WeThe15 campaign. Leslie, who came up with the [Tree of Hope](#) concept also directed the music video ‘Live out loud’, and has connected more than 3,000 para-athletes and people who support para-sports through photographs. He also shared his thoughts with Andrew, and they discussed meaningful cooperation on WeThe15 and their shared aims for the evolution of society.





The innovative ‘W1SH RIBBON DISCOVER & CONNECT THE WORLD’ campaign, started earlier this year and shares many of the same goals as WeThe15. Thousands of colorful ribbons with wishes inscribed have been attached to the ‘Tree of Hope’ monument located at the observation deck of Tokyo Skytree. Given the current travel restrictions, the campaign is also being driven via social media. People anywhere in the world can send in their wishes using the hashtag #W1SHRIBBON. This global campaign is designed to gather the hopes and wishes of people all over the world to reaffirm unity, solidarity and hope during what has been a challenging time for the entire global community.

Andrew Parsons, President, International Paralympic Committee

Before becoming IPC President in September 2017, Andrew served the IPC in multiple roles, including Vice President (2013-2017), Governing Member (2009-2013), as well as Chairperson of the IPC Paralympic Games Committee from 2009-2013. Additionally, he was the President of the Americas Paralympic Committee from 2005-2009 after serving as its Secretary General from 2002-2005.

As IPC President, Andrew made strengthening the IPC’s relationship with the IOC a top priority. In March 2018, together with IOC President Thomas Bach, he signed a long-term IPC-IOC agreement through to 2032 which increases the co-operation and support between two organizations.

In October 2018 Andrew was elected an IOC member and currently represents the IPC in the IOC Coordination Commissions for Tokyo 2020 and LA 2028. He is also a member of the IOC Marketing Commission and is on the Board of Directors for the Olympic Channel.

Aside from his involvement with the IPC, between 2009 and 2017, Andrew served as President of the Brazilian Paralympic Committee (CPB) after working as CPB Secretary General from 2001-2009.