Savoie is a small French area or ‘département’ whose principal economic activity is tourism and who has worked hard and been privileged during the past 10 years to organize the XVI Olympic Winter Games in Albertville in 1992, the rowing world championships in Aiguebelette in 1997, matches of the handball world championships in January 2001, including the French team in Albertville on its way to the world title. In 2002, it will host the canoe/kayak world championships in Bourg-St-Maurice, and in the longer term the biathlon in Haute-Maurienne.

This privilege is thanks to two visionaries who, together, decided to build a Savoie of tourism and sports for the 21st century: Jean-Claude Killy, triple Olympic champion and IOC member and Michel Barnier, today the European Commissioner responsible for regional policy.

This shows the importance of the sport/tourism problem in Savoie, whether it is a matter of recreational sport or high-level competition. Savoie belongs to this immense natural area which are the Alps, with lakes and mountains suitable for a number of winter and summer sports.

Relations between sport and tourism

Some sports themselves generate a flow of tourism: winter sports which today in France represent a large share of winter tourism and require large-scale infrastructures are an example. Some sports require external infrastructures but are not themselves tourist sports although they might sometimes constitute theme holidays. Finally, some sports which have world competitions at the highest level with very high media exposure, require on such occasions substantial tourist infrastructures.

Tourist-specific sports

The most tourist-oriented sports from a practical point of view generally need a particular natural environment.

The most well-known are skiing and other snow sports, water sports and any kind of walking and hiking, climbing, rock-climbing, cycling, air sports, fishing, hunting and golf. All these sports require a means of travelling, accommodation and at least the equipment needed to practise the activity in question.

Studies carried out in France by the National Tourism Council have shown that many of these sports involved sliding or gliding, that they had a future, but that it was necessary to take into account the demographic and sociological changes of the customer, and that this would have consequences for the infrastructures. A danger for tourism in the case of some of these sports would be a change towards using urban or pre-urban artificial sites or virtual sites.

Sports that are not directly linked to tourism

Sports that are not directly related to tourism become tourist sports when world championships or major international competitions are held or where there are permanent training centres. As far as infrastructures are concerned, one can use the approach of ‘customers’ and ‘users’. What are the needs in terms of infrastructures of the spectator sportsman, the school sportsman, the teacher sportsman, the competing sportsman, the organizing sportsman, the journalist sportsman, the official sportsman and the sponsor sportsman?

Each family of customers has its own needs in recreational or work terms, while they all need to be welcomed,
transported, accommodated, fed and entertained: that is what tourism involves. The Olympic Winter Games, organized in a mountain valley cumulate on their own scale all of these needs, as they concern nearly all categories of sportsmen including youngsters at ski school, competitors of course, spectators, the media, officials and organizers.

The Savoie example of the XVI Olympic Winter Games in 1992
At the time of the candidature of Albertville and Savoie in 1983, the problem was first one of tourist infra-
structure which became a sports problem and led to sustainable development.

Faced with the potential of sport, public decision-makers must look at how to satisfy the traditional needs of the local population and tourists with a common characteristic: the phenomena of peaks within a tourist season and the sports calendar.

In the 1980s the ski resorts of Savoie were among the leading winter sports centres in the world with outstanding ski-lifts, modern ski slopes, with a substantial yet unbalanced accommodation capacity, almost non-existent ice facilities, little in terms of cultural facilities and above all were difficult to access or bordering on the inaccessible in a competitive tourist economy: during peak season, it took several hours to go from Geneva to Tarentaise.

Whatever the result, the candidature for organizing the Olympic Games should enable the rapid improvement of the road and railway infrastructures of Savoie.

Once the candidature had been approved, the organization of the Games first made it possible to achieve this goal and then to create very high-level sports facilities, improve the quality of the accommodation, use modern technology, renew or build hospitals, provide Savoie with cultural facilities, renew its religious heritage and boost rural development.

Owing to the obligation for providing results laid on the organizers with the imperative need for the Games to begin on time, equipment that could not have been prepared under normal circumstances for administrative, financial or technical reasons was put in place. This is the magic of the Olympic Games and any other large-scale unifying projects. It was possible to have access to exceptional public and private funding, all of which contributed to sustainable development.

The sports infrastructure
These concern both competition and training and must meet the requirements of the International sports Federations. The organizing committee must correlate the point of view of the Federations (who set the rules but do not pay) and that of the users, present and future. It is for the owners and managers to integrate the post-Olympic use of the facilities.

The alpine and Nordic ski slopes of the Albertville Games all have a dual sporting and tourist function: the organization of international competitions (the International Criterium of the first snow in Val d’Isère) and ski slopes for the general public. Ski-lifts and artificial snow are naturally part of this.

The ski-jumps in Courchevel have no tourist function as ski-jumping is limited to the sports federations but training and competitions are a tourist attraction for visitors to Courchevel, especially in summer.

For ice sports, the four ice rinks concerned (at Albertville, Courchevel, Méribel and Pralognan) have a sport-specific function (including training camps for national and local teams and international competitions) as well as a recreational function for tourists and the resident population going beyond a purely sporting context in terms of versatility: the Olympic hall in Albertville has hosted both handball world championship matches, concerts by singers Johnny Halliday and Michel Sardou and hote-
liers conferences.
Bobsleigh and luge are a special case: from an overall economic perspective, the creation of an artificial bobsleigh and luge track poses a cost question (250 million French Francs) related to the number of potential users and security equipment with the status of a ‘classified installation’. But the ‘la Plagne’ bob track was the price of the Games: now it has to work. It is structurally deficient but has a real tourist impact in terms of visits by sportspeople and the practice of bob-raft. Despite their construction and running costs bobsleigh and luge tracks are still being built.

In total, the amount spent on the Olympic sports infrastructures for 1992 exceeded one billion French Francs.

Means of communication
These were at the heart of the project of the Albertville Olympic Games with the creation of motorways and fast roads, the arrival of the TGV (high speed train) in Bourg-Saint-Maurice, the creation or renovation of rail and road stations, the modernization and expansion of the Chambéry-Aix les Bains airport.

Five billion French Francs was jointly invested by public and private partners on the theme “help yourself, heaven will help you”. The result was road access to meet the traffic demands generated by the tourist activities of the Savoie area, increased road security and security against natural risks, a developed landscape with new routes and a modern concept of motorways from the point of view of the environment, landscape and the integration of works of art, competitive rail access: French and North European TGVs run to the stations of Tarentaise in the winter, and Chambéry airport is open to the charter flight market with the advent of modern medium-haul planes.

Accommodation
A Savoie hotel modernization plan was launched in 1988 concerning 211 hotels, with 40 million French Francs of subsidies towards funding 420 million’s worth of work. This programme has since been renewed three times with the financial participation of the Savoie Area Council and the Rhône-Alpes Regional Council.

The transformation of the summer spa of Brides-les-Bains into the Olympic Village of the Olympic Winter Games was one of the most difficult challenges of the Games, with the need for temporary constructions. The Albertville project was original in that it located the Main Press Centre and the International Radio and Television Centre at the disused factories of La Léchère and Moûtiers. Industrial wasteland was reconverted into accommodation, a gym, an entertainment hall, a cultural centre and a business centre covering an area of 40,000m².

Other infrastructure
Other infrastructures were created for the Games and later used to satisfy the needs of the tourist population:

- Access to the Léchère press centre.
- Reconstruction of the Albertville hospital, renovation of the hospitals of Moûtiers and Bourg-St-Maurice, a cleaning up programme, reduction of the telecommunications network with the arrival of radiotelephone and fibre optics, and the implementation of an effective network of meteorological stations.

In the cultural domain, the Olympic deadline made it possible to obtain exceptional funding for a programme to restore and show off the historical patrimony of Savoie as well as the creation of a cablecar between Brides-les-Bains and the ski resorts of the Trois Vallées. This challenge has been met today both in terms of communal funding and in terms of numbers of visiting tourists.

The Club Med villages of la Plagne, Tignes and Val d’Isère were used to accommodate the athletes.

Infrastructure for the media
The needs of the media are far greater than those of the local population or tourists. There was therefore a need for temporary constructions. The Albertville project was original in that it located the Main Press Centre and the International Radio and Television Centre at the disused factories of La Léchère and Moûtiers. Industrial wasteland was reconverted into accommodation, a gym, an entertainment hall, a cultural centre and a business centre covering an area of 40,000m².

Other infrastructure
Other infrastructures were created for the Games and later used to satisfy the needs of the tourist population:
creation of the Dôme theatre in Albertville and the Jean-Jacques Rousseau media library in Chambéry. All these efforts in the area of infrastructures allied to human will and new possibilities for cooperation enabled Savoie to modernize its tourist offer and better meet the expectations of its customers, with the emergence of an environmental concern, cultural and heritage tourism, new forms of sliding sports, etc.

Conclusion
Major sports events, on account of their size, impact, the emotions they generate, their image, capacity for mobilizing people and the global stakes involved make it possible to create infrastructure that leads to sustainable development in record time. The natural dimension concerns the Winter Games to a greater extent, while the gigantism dimension naturally concerns the Games of the Olympiad.

From a tourist economy point of view, the infrastructures created for the Winter Games in Savoie have made it possible to achieve an annual winter figure of 21 million overnight stays and an annual revenue of 2.2 million French Francs from ski-lift passes last season. The road network can cope with 35,000 vehicles (the maximum figure recorded in Tarentaise during school holidays; it was 18,000 vehicles before the Games). The ratios that evaluate the external and internal effects of large-scale road projects are largely higher than average. Ten years after the Games, a new security and viability plan for road access is underway.

All this is very important in the competitive world of tourism.

Every cloud has a silver lining: the Games in Albertville took place during a period of economic recession and tight monetary policy. Some ‘support’ communes encountered financial difficulties, from which they have mostly recovered today. They have rediscovered the path of growth and borrowing capacity.

Sports tourism may generate conflicts of use in the case of the infrastructures it creates through a different occupation of space. This is particularly the case for water sports but it is hard to imagine rowers doing without lakes or fisherman without rivers.

Major sports events are comparable to a high speed train: if you take it you can travel very quickly from Tokyo to Nagano, Brussels to London or Paris to Albertville; if you miss it, you have a long wait for the next one.

Under certain conditions, the Olympic Games make sustainable development possible with a sports event which by nature is ephemeral and cannot be repeated in the same place: an organizing committee for the Olympic Games is a company that knows the date of its death.

To achieve this objective, the candidature and planning phases are vital. It is then that the post-Olympic use is decided, that the line is drawn between the temporary and the permanent.

Major sports events today generate many candidatures. Regardless of which continent they are from, behind nearly every project there is an idea of development and mobilization of energy. The Games are never organized for nothing.

* Director General of Tourism, Department of Savoie (France); member of the National Tourism Council; former sports director of the Organizing Committee for the XVI Olympic Winter Games in Albertville in 1992; member of the IOC Coordination Commission for the XX Olympic Winter Games in Turin in 2006.