We’ve reached the last month of 2017 and it is the perfect time to take a moment and reflect on what has happened this last year.

The Panam Sports President, Neven Ilic, Secretary General, Ivar Sisniega and the rest of the Panam Sports team would like to wish the members of the Executive Committee, Presidents and Leaders of the NOCs, athletes, coaches and the entire continental sports family very Happy Holidays. We hope 2018 brings positive energy, joy, health, and prosperity to all of you in sport.
The 11th Central American Games were hosted in Managua from December 3rd to the 17th. The city welcomed over 3,500 athletes from 7 different countries.

It’s the first time in the history of Nicaragua to host an event of such magnitude, for which they have been preparing for over the last 4 years; not only at the sporting level, but also in terms of vital infrastructure.

Amongst the development of sport facilities were the colossal Dennis Martinez Baseball field, a basketball court with best-in-class floors and impressive installations, an Aquatic Centre with an Olympic pool and a 25 meter long warm up pool and a beautiful center for rowing and canoeing competitions in Granada.

“This is a great accomplishment and legacy for Nicaragua. Everyone’s witnessed the infrastructure we’ve been able to build these past 4 years and I truly believe Nicaragua stepped up tremendously for these Central American Games. The main idea was for the athletes to be able to share, get to know one another and form a tight bond, something we can proudly say was accomplished”, pointed out Nicaraguan NOC President, Commander Emmet Lang.

The 11th Central American Games winner was the nation of Guatemala, bringing in a total of 283 medals; 110 Gold, 87 Silver and 86 Bronze. El Salvador placed second with a total of 179 medals (69-62-48) and Panama in third with a total of 216 (58-77-81).

The Games were a true celebration from beginning to end. Not only did they highlight a region which excels in sport more and more every day, but a country which proved that with a lot of hard work and dedication, it was able to organize and host a magnificent event. Looking ahead, these 7 Central America countries will join the Caribbean nations in a spectacular competition in Barranquilla 2018 for the Central American and Caribbean Games.
“We’re confident and happy. We’ve begun construction on the foundation of the Pan American Village. We’re now filling excavations with cement and, in 15 days, we will be ready for the buildings to start going up. We’re right on schedule and everything is going as planned. We’re in constant communication with Besco, the company leading the construction of the Village, and we’re following the progress daily” points out COPAL President, Carlos Neuhaus.

It’s been a little over two months since Peruvian President, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, and Panam Sports President, Neven Ilic, tossed the first “shicras” (first stones) on what will soon become the Lima 2019 Pan American Village. On this day, they met to discuss construction deadlines and were assured that construction would begin in November.

That deadline was met. The main construction on the Athletes’ Village located in Villa El Salvador, Lima has begun. In a few days, seven 20 story buildings will each begin to be built.

In Peru, after the qualification for the World Cup in Russia, the air is full of happiness and pride. This great accomplishment will rejuvenate Peruvians’ love for sport and provide a positive perception the Pan American Games.

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“People are no longer asking whether we are going to make it or not, they’re now betting that we will, and that the Pan American Games will be excellent. After the World Cup celebrations are over, we will start promoting the Lima 2019 Games with full force” adds Neuhaus.

It’s worth noting that the main construction of the Pan American Village is scheduled to be finished February 2019. There will be 7 buildings total with 20 floors each, which will house over 7 thousand athletes from 41 different countries from around the continent. The Consorcio Besco-Besalco are in charge of the project and managing it closely.
Panam Sports President, Neven Ilic’s, first order of business was to get together with as many NOCs as possible in an effort to help identify their individual needs and, with that information, develop a plan for everyone to work together as efficiently as possible.

Most of the NOCs accepted the invitation to visit the Panam Sports offices in Miami, FL but Dominican NOC President and IOC Member, Luis Mejia, invited Neven Ilic to the Caribbean island instead, in hopes of showing him the reality of the Dominican Republic.

In two days, the Panam Sports President was able to visit the sporting facilities, meet with the Minister of Sport, Danilo Diaz, the Executive Director for “Creando Sueños Olímpicos”, businessman Felipe Vicini, and the greatest local hero, two-time Olympic and world champion, Felix Sanchez.

“I am incredibly surprised at the way sport is growing in Dominican Republic. It’s very clear that there is continuous effort between the Olympic Committee, Felipe Vicini, the Government and Minister Diaz to work together”, pointed out Ilic.

“The idea was to show him what we’ve been working on as far as the Olympic Committee goes and I think we achieved that in the short time he was here and we’re very thankful to him for coming”, said Luis Mejia.

It’s mesmerizing to see the Olympic Park with its great layout and attention to detail, but the establishment the Dominican NOC is most proud of is the Olympic Center of High Performance. A modern structure with enough commodities to host hundreds of athletes from all over the world.

“It’s an impressive structure. With all of its sporting installations, plus this beautiful center, this country is ready to be the sporting development epicenter of the Caribbean and the Americas. I congratulate the great work they’ve been doing, especially my dear friend, President Luis Mejia”, concluded Ilic.

His trip concluded with a very interesting meeting with none other than 400-meter hurdle Olympic Champion, Felix Sanchez, who told us about his experience in the world of sport and his new career as Sport Director of the Dominican Republic.

Felix’s passion, love for sport, and eagerness to help is so great, that President Neven Ilic invited him to be part of the Panam Sports Sporting Development Commission, which Felix accepted graciously.
The first official gathering of all 41 member countries of Panam Sports culminated at the General Assembly in Prague, Czech Republic on November 4, 2017.

The main objective was to review the activities of the organization under the new leadership of President, Neven Ilic, and Secretary General, Ivar Sisniega, over the last seven months.

The format of the Assembly was developed to encourage participation and interaction with the member nations, as well as share information through diverse media to modernize the proceedings.

Some of the most important items of the General Assembly were the remarks by President, Neven Ilic, regarding the Panam Sports strategic plan, the organizational structure by Secretary General, Ivar Sisniega, and a marketing update announcing the new Panam Sports brand. There was also the awarding of Santiago, Chile as the host city of the Pan American Games 2023, the commitment to establishing the Youth Pan American Games and a through presentation from the Lima 2019 Organizing Committee on the progress on construction and development of the Pan American Games.

“I’m extremely proud of our first Assembly as an organization here in Prague. I think it has been productive and well received from each of our members. Our intentions are simply to show everyone our future projects, where we’re headed and establish how the different National Olympic Committees can work with one another”, pointed out the Panam Sports President.

Neven Ilic is implementing a new way to lead the organization and focused on modernizing the administration overall. He is set out to have a tight bond with the NOCs of the Americas and to truly understand their needs. By identifying and prioritizing those needs, Panam Sports aims to help each member nation develop sport in their nations by giving them the proper tools to succeed, keeping athletes truly at the center of our movement.

Panam Sports is dedicated to the work ahead. Ilic’s team and the Panam Sports Commissions are working non-stop to further develop sport and our athletes in the Americas. This is only the beginning and we are proud to already see the positivity, energy and motivation of all those a part of the organization to bring this vision to life.
Panam Sports put a special call out to all young aspiring journalists of the Americas for the chance to be chosen for the International Olympic Committee Young Reporters Programme.

Our incredible ambassadors have been chosen and the following four star reporters are:

• Rachel White, United States
• Fatima Martinez, Paraguay
• Anmar Goodridge Boyce, Barbados
• Sharome Burton, Dominica

Over 30 applications flooded the Panam Sports office, each one filled with the dreams of participating in a once in a lifetime experience covering the 2018 Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires.

Choosing the winners from our region was an extremely tough process undertaken by the Communications and Marketing Department of Panam Sports, who selected 10 finalists based on the contestants’ applications.

The Panam Sports Executive Committee received, via email, the finalists’ information along with the task of selecting the four finalists.

Now, the International Olympic Committee must decide if these young reporters from our region will be part of the selected 26 winners from around the world who will get to travel to Buenos Aires and be a part of the most important youth sporting event of 2018.
Over 1300 attendees, including the world’s top athletes, a red carpet full of reporters and photographers and the entire Olympic family were part of the distinguished National Olympic Committees Association (ANOC) Awards Gala that took place this past November 3rd in Prague, Czech Republic.

The Americas received the following awards recognizing outstanding efforts in four categories. Yulimar Rojas of Venezuela received Best Female Athlete of the Americas after claiming the world champion title in triple jump at the 2017 IAAF World Championships.

“I am delighted to receive this award and dedicate it to Venezuela. Being the best in the Americas speaks volumes and I think a lot of great things are coming my way in the future. I hope to keep bringing greatness to sports in my region; now to keep working hard and striving for more” said Yulimar Rojas

Best Male Athlete of the Americas was awarded to a team this year, highlighting the tremendous achievement of Trinidad and Tobago becoming World Champions in the 4 x 400 relay. The entire 4-man team was present at the Awards ceremony including: Jarrin Solomon, Jareem Richards, Michael Cedenio and Lalonde Gordon.

“This award isn’t given out every day. This is why we’re grateful and we thank God. This proves that our hard work is paying off and everything unfolded as we had hoped”, added Jarrin Solomon from Trinidad & Tobago.

Our Honorary Panam Sports President, Dr. Julio Maglione of Uruguay, was awarded the Outstanding Lifetime Achievement award with Michael Fennell of Jamaica recognized for his great contribution to the Olympic Movement as a global sport leader.

“I’m extremely thankful for this award. It’s a true honor for me to receive such recognition from ANOC. I want to give a huge thanks to the President of ANOC and all of the members of this organization”, said Julio Maglione.

We are extremely proud of all the recipients and congratulate all members of the Panam Sports family on this honour.
The local team finished in first place with a total of 460 medals. 213 gold, 136 silver, and 111 bronze. An amazing result from a country that keeps excelling in international sporting competitions.

For many, the 2017 Bolivarian Games have been one of the best in history. For 16 days, Santa Marta housed over 4,000 athletes from 11 different countries for a high-level sport event in which Colombia came out on top.

The locals’ main objective was to defend the title they obtained in Lima 4 years ago, but not even the most optimistic Colombian could have predicted the wide margin by which they distanced themselves from their rivals in the medals table; 460 medals that highlight the triumphant moment Colombian sport is currently experiencing.

“This balance is incredibly positive. We prepared ourselves with the intention of winning, but I have to be frank and confess that we didn’t expect to win by such a large margin compared to the other countries, especially Venezuela, our longstanding rival,” said the Colombian Olympic Committee President, Baltazar Medina.

Venezuela was the runner up with a total of 292 medals, 94 of those gold, with Chile holding on to third place with 156 medals.

For President Medina, the success was not only on the playing field. The entire country of Colombia is celebrating, which seemed to be in jeopardy some months ago.

“This event faced challenges due to economic difficulties and we struggled to build the infrastructure on time, but in the end, we were able to pull this off. We made our best efforts to be great hosts to the participating countries. We had full stands in all of the sporting events and I believe all athletes felt very welcomed here in Colombia,” noted Colombian NOC President.

There has been immense success for Team Colombia, not only in Santa Marta, but throughout the Olympic Cycle including the Toronto 2015 Pan American Games and Rio 2016 Olympics. Medina feels the need to mention that “We have a 15-million-dollar annual budget. With this money we prepare for events, offer incentives, pay the coaching staff and beyond, but we also have a great investment at the state level. Decentralization has been Colombia’s best strategy. Working in the provinces and the capital cities is a crucial factor to achieving our results.”

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Javier is one of the most renowned athletes in Cuba and a Track & Field legend. Competing in high jump, Javier won Olympic gold at the 1992 Barcelona Games, silver in Sydney 2000, claimed 6 world championship titles, including 4 indoor titles, and still holds the high jump world record of 2.45 meters.

During his successful athletic career, Javier Sotomayor won 3 Pan American Games titles beginning in Indianapolis in 1987. Four years later, in front of a home crowd, he claimed gold in Havana 1991 and, to finish his continental conquests, he stood on top of the podium in Mar del Plata 1995.

The Pan American Games were an integral part of his journey to becoming one of the world’s greatest athletes in the sport of Athletics.
The current member of the IOC and Panam Sports Executive Board is an Olympic athlete, who has made an incredible impact on her home country of Aruba, but also the rest of the continent and beyond.

At the age of 9, Nicole was introduced to synchronized swimming and from that moment, her life changed forever. It was love at first sight; a love that helped her grow, achieve her goals and, most importantly, find true happiness.

Despite not having the proper tools to succeed, such as a pool or even a qualified coach, she was able to reach the ultimate athlete’s dream of representing her country at the Olympic Games.

It was the 1984 Olympic Games in the city of angels — Los Angeles, USA, when Nicole made her country proud. For the first time in Aruba’s history, they presented a synchronized swimming duet at the Olympic Games.

“It was an amazing experience. Participating at the Olympic Games is something indescribable. We didn’t have a pool, we didn’t have a professional coach, but what we did have was experience and we were eager to represent our country” remembers Nicole Hoevertsz.

Nicole was only 20 years old and despite not being able to stand on the podium, this unforgettable experience set the precedent for her successful career as a coach and, later on, a Sports Leader.

“After Los Angeles ’84 I decided to retire from competing and start dedicating myself to coaching. It was the best decision I’ve ever made. I was already coaching as a volunteer and once I decided to fully commit myself, I started working towards the development of sports in Aruba. Today I am proud of how sports has taken off in our country and the growing relevance of synchronized swimming” says the IOC member.

This past December 15th, at the IOC Session in Lima, Nicole Hoevertsz was given the great honour to become a member of the IOC Executive Board. She is only the 4th woman of 15 members, marking a historic female presence in this sports organization.

We acknowledge and thank all her tremendous efforts. Nicole has shown great consistency, professionalism, knowledge, passion and life-long dedication to sport and the Olympic Movement.

Congratulations to a great Panam Sports leader on the global stage!
The United States Olympic Committee recognized the remarkable performances of Team USA athletes at UCLA’s Royce Hall in Los Angeles on November 29.

PANAM SPORTS CONGRATULATES ALL THE WINNERS:

Female Olympic Athlete of the Year:
Katie Ledecky, swimming

Male Olympic Athlete of the Year:
Kyle Snyder, wrestling

Olympic Team of the Year:
Women’s National Team, ice hockey

Olympic Coach of the Year:
Bill Zadick, wrestling

Female Paralympic Athlete of the Year:
Tatyana McFadden, Para track and field

Male Paralympic Athlete of the Year:
Mikey Brannigan, Para track and field

Paralympic Team of the Year:
U.S. National Team, sled hockey

Paralympic Coach of the Year:
Eileen Carey, Para Nordic skiing
WE SAY GOODBYE
TO A GREAT FRIEND
AND ADVOCATE OF
PAN AMERICAN SPORT

Distinguished Sport Director, former President of the Bahamas Olympic Committee and Count of Winton, Arlington Griffith Butler, has passed away after a long and slow illness. Panam Sports is saddened by this loss and expresses its solidarity to his family, friends and entire sport family of the Bahamas.

Arlington Griffith Butler will forever remain in our hearts as a great friend and a passionate sports leader, a passionate sports leader, who was also a great promoter of Pan American sport and a member of our Executive Board.

Griffith passed away at 79 years old at the hospital where he was being treated; bringing much sadness to the Bahamas and our sport community.

Aside from being an outstanding professor in his native country, Griffith was also a political activist and held the office of Minister of State on two separate occasions throughout his career.

His passion for sport propelled him to become the President of the Bahamas National Committee for over 40 years, receiving countless awards for his work which benefited the sport world and athletes of his country immensely.

During these difficult times for his family and friends, the President of Panam Sports, Neven Ilic and the Secretary General, Ivar Sisniega, would like to express their most sincere condolences and thank Mr. Arlington Griffith Butler for his great contributions to Pan American sport.

SIR AIRLINGTON GRIFFITH BUTLER
1938-2017
Rest in Peace
On Saturday, December 9th, in beautiful Islas Mujeres, located next to Cancun, in the Mexican Caribbean, our very own Secretary General, Ivar Sisniega, tied the knot with Miss Sayda del Rio.

We, at Panam Sports, would like to wish them both nothing but happiness on this new journey they have embarked on. We hope the celebration was filled with family, friends and, of course, love.

Throughout the fourth quarter, we have hosted several Panam Sports Commissions in Miami to continue their important work to further our organization.

The Olympic Academies, Culture and Education Commission met in November led by their President, Alfred Emmanuel, who is also Secretary General of the Santa Lucia NOC.

“We had productive meetings where we agreed on the next steps that will innovate and help with the modernization of this commission, mainly via platforms which will be implemented at the Lima 2019 Pan American Games. We will also implement relationships with Universities for research purposes. The first order of business, though, is a photography contest where we highlight the Olympic Values” points out one of the Commission members, Jaime Agliati.

The Women and Sport Commission, led by President Silvia Gonzalez, also met in Miami for their first meeting which opened up several topics of discussion and allowed the group to determine key next steps for 2018.

“We are thrilled and motivated with this wonderful mission. The first thing we’ll do is determine how we are doing across our continent by how many National Olympic Committees have an active Women’s Commission. We will send out a survey and, with the data gathered, will organize these commissions in a way that each will have at least two activities per calendar year. We are going to offer all the support and guidance in order to help them with this task and guarantee success”, pointed out Silvia Gonzalez.

December 24th:
Washigton Beltrán
Secretary General, NOC Uruguay

December 30th:
Erskine Sinclair Simmons
Secretary General, NOC Barbados

January 2nd:
Annette Susan Knott
Secretary General, NOC Trinidad and Tobago

January 15th:
Chet Greene
President, NOC Antigua and Barbuda