

Sochi Games Chief 'Modestly Proud' After IOC Praise

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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SOCHI — The Sochi Olympics have been spared major problems despite a difficult run-up, with Games chief Dmitry Chernyshenko saying praise from the International Olympic Committee at the halfway mark was welcome but still premature.

Russia's first Winter Games have been in the news spotlight for months as President Vladimir Putin staked his personal as well as his country's image on a successful Olympics at the Black Sea resort.

Fears of a backlash from athletes over Russia's controversial anti-gay propaganda law and its human rights record have so far not materialized, while sunshine and mild temperatures have added to the Games' appeal rather than affecting competitions up to now.

"We are modestly proud and satisfied with the achievements so far," Chernyshenko said in an interview Friday. "But we are not relaxing. There are still many things to do until the end

of the Games and the most exciting competitions are ahead."

The IOC said Friday that Games organizers had delivered on promises, with operations running smoothly and more enthusiasm among visiting fans than initially anticipated. The Committee was also satisfied with global broadcast ratings.

"You are always a bit tense at the beginning of the events, to make sure that finally it is going to work or not work," IOC Games executive director Gilbert Felli told reporters.



Alexander Demianchuk / REUTERS

Visitors standing in line to enter a souvenir shop at the Olympic Park during the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics.

"I have to say, from day one when we turned the key to start, that we have been only happy with what did happen with the organization and the fluidity of the operations."

Organizers have almost halved seating numbers compared with past events, especially in the mountain venues, for security reasons. The coastal Olympic park — a first for a Winter Games — drew some 106,000 spectators Thursday, according to Chernyshenko.

"We hope that Russia will create the blueprint and new standards in efficiency and compactness of the Games," he said.

"It will be difficult to repeat because we had the natural advantage of literally not having anything here and built everything from scratch," he said. The Games involved a total investment of about \$50 billion for venues and infrastructure projects.

What has yet to happen, however, is a rush of medals for hosts Russia.

"Without [Russian] athletes on the podiums the Games hardly would be called a success," he said. "We are looking forward to Russian athletes performing at their best. Of course we are dreaming of medals."

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