

Address of H. M. the King of the Hellenes to the Members of the International Olympic Committee at the opening ceremony of the 49th session 10th May 1954 at Athens

I wish to extend a warm welcome to the President and the Members of the International Olympic Committee.

I can feel right at this moment the presence here of the spirit of my late Father, King Constantine, who, animated by his unshaken faith in the Olympic Ideal, was one of the leading initiators of the Olympic Games. Despite forbidding local obstacles, he himself organized the first Games in Athens, in 1896, and acted as President of the Greek Olympic Committee from 1894 to 1913.

The aim which has brought you all here today is a high and noble one.

We modern Greeks are fully conscious of the nobility and the greatness of the Olympic Ideal. We understand, too, how much this ideal can help humanity today in finding the right path.

True to an age-long and deep-rooted tradition, we have always paid due respect

to the things of the mind and of the spirit, and have honoured those who are their bearers. That is why we regard the presence of the Members of the International Olympic Committee as an honour for our country, and we are indeed happy to offer hospitality to this intellectual meeting, dedicated to the advancement of the Olympic Spirit, which is identified with the Spirit of Peace.

The sacred place where we are gathered today, under the shadow of the Parthenon, the temple of the Goddess of Wisdom, and on the slopes of the Areopagus whence Saint Paul, the Apostle of the Nations, preached the Gospel, forms the most fitting setting to inspire us all with noble thoughts.

May your stay here be pleasant and your labours fruitful.

I now declare the 49th Session of The International Olympic Committee open.