

Speech
given by Mr. Gheorghi Damianov

President of the Presidium
of the National Assembly of the People's
Republic of Bulgaria

at the Solemn Opening Ceremony of the 53d Session
in Sofia — September 22nd 1957

Mister President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the great pleasure indeed, on behalf of the Presidium of the National Assembly of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, to bid all the International Olympic Committee members and guests come to our country a most cordial welcome. All of you are already well known to us by name for your significant contributions to the development of international sports, to the establishment and consolidation of sincere friendship among sportsmen and peoples the whole world over.

In our People's Republic sports form an integral part of the upbringing and general education of our nation. We consider physical culture as a major component part of the term 'culture'. And no wonder, as the parallel mental and physical development of the human being constitutes the soundest basis for the shaping of a harmonious, all-round development of the individual in society.

The principles embodied in the Olympic ideal and activities towards the promotion of peace and friendship among nations by way of sportsmanship in competition are held in the highest light not only by those who are out on the playgrounds, but by Bulgarian youth as a whole.

The International Olympic Committee has on more than one occasion given ample and tangible proof that sports and good sportsmanship have no room for the segregation of mankind as to race, political or religious creed. Every sportsman is first and foremost a human being, and as such entitled to our fullest esteem.

We sincerely hope that the delegates and guests to this Session of the International Olympic Committee will enjoy appropriate conditions for work in our capital, in true Olympic spirit. We want you to feel at home in our country, and wish you success in your undertaking in the interest of world sports.

Bidding you all once more a most cordial welcome to Bulgaria, I now call the 53rd Session of the International Olympic Committee to order.