

To all participants at the 9th Session

Gentlemen,

Allow me first of all to thank your honourable President for the permission he so graciously granted me to assure you of the sincere regrets of my colleague, the Minister of the Interior, who, kept elsewhere by his duties, has had to forego the pleasure of telling you himself here, at the beginning of your work, of the sympathy felt by the Queen's government for your undertaking and its good wishes for the success of your efforts.

In keeping with the traditions of antiquity, you are endeavouring to revive the friendly rivalry between nations on the athletics field which, in classical times, gave Hellas such healthy, strong and beautiful people. The peaceful contests, of which the plain stretching before the sanctuaries at Olympia was periodically the theatre, also contributed to maintaining and strengthening good relations between the states which at that time constituted the Hellenic world, and to reviving among their peoples the feeling of their common ancestry and the resulting ties of friendship, after this feeling had been darkened and these ties had been broken as a result of one of those wars to which differences in material interests and the antagonism of political ambitions frequently led.

Only, your efforts are applied to a far wider theatre. The Olympic Games today aim to develop among the peoples of the whole universe the love of sport that forms healthy, skilful, brave and strong men, by means of international competitions to which are invited the most skilful and the most competent among those who go in for games of skill and strength in these various countries. In these peaceful jousts they learn to bear a chivalrous respect towards each other. On their return home, they spread this feeling. In this way they help to weaken the national antipathies that are so dangerous for proper understanding between countries and often prevent it.

Considered from the point of view I have just mentioned, the work that you are organizing and putting into effect yourselves tends, as formerly in the world of Ancient Greece, to strengthen and to develop among the peoples of the world a spirit whose influence may help prevent international differences and misunderstanding from growing worse at a time when democratic aspirations are tending to prevail in the governmental organization of all countries.

Allow me therefore, Gentlemen, to welcome you also as collaborators in the work of pacification that is at present uniting the efforts of so many and such varied men of good will, backed by a current of public opinion that is undeniably beginning to grow.

Van Tets van Goudriaan