

# Address given by Mr. Pierre Graber

*President of the Swiss Confederation*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*In welcoming you wholeheartedly on behalf of the Federal Council, I would like to express to you the great pleasure I feel in being present at the opening of the 76th Session of the international Olympic Committee.*

*There are several reasons why I should be pleased. In the first place, as President Raymond Gafner has said, my contacts with your Committee are not just of recent date. They go back to the time when my personal fortunes were closely linked to the City of Lausanne, to the 1950s when, in fact, I put forward the case for the candidature of this city for the organization of the Olympic Games.*

*I am really most happy that you have chosen to meet, for the sixth time, at Lausanne which is the headquarters of your Committee. The unflagging interest of public opinion in your activities spills over on to this city and is bound to enhance its international vocation.*

*Another point—which I would like to underline—is that many of your concerns rejoin those from which our foreign policy is drawn.*

*As it is for you also, universality is the main objective of our endeavours. In that aim, we see the indispensable corollary to our permanent neutrality, which in turn is a voucher for our national independence.*

*Besides, you have the long established tradition of thinking about today and about tomorrow, carrying out a constant “aggiornamento”, for the survival of any organism whatsoever depends on its capacity to adjust to change. For the world of today and tomorrow, as personified by “the boys and the girls of the whole world” to whom your movement is dedicated—for that world also we express our fervent wishes for peace and concord, for a more harmonious balance in greater social justice.*

*We have the highest esteem for the work of Baron Pierre de Coubertin and for those who carried on his work and hence also for your activities. Character training, keeping alive the love of fair competition, making sports activities the occasion for constant contacts among people coming from the most diverse parts, despite their differences, this is the healthy Olympic spirit and a sound schooling in international understanding. Among its supporters, this spirit may develop the sense of belonging to the international community, a solidarity which transcends national concerns and interests.*

*At a time when Switzerland is more conscious than ever before of the interdependence of nations and human beings, we appreciate the importance of the qualities which you stand for. We are aware of the value of these qualities in the quest for an ethic based on dialogue, the respect of others and the sense of endeavour in the service of an ideal.*

*Youth is above all generous and enthusiastic, but we must give young people the motivation for these sentiments, and it is your function to provide this motivation. Accordingly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Swiss Olympic Committee for its efforts to keep this flame alive in the hearts of the young people of our country. Never before, perhaps, have untoward current events been responsible for so many pitfalls in the path of those who are striving for an international equilibrium based on law and justice. Yet, at the same time, never before have the means of spreading this ideal been available with such great efficiency.*

*Few events can rival the Olympic Games in their capacity to arouse public opinion. The loneliness of the long distance runner and competitions by teams are followed in the entire world through the press and the audio-visual media. I would say millions of spectators “live” the Olympic spirit. These international contests have aroused countless ambitions and hopes, but their greatest virtue is that they give to the world an image which counters whatever in the world around us may incline us to be pessimistic and to give up the fight.*

*I shall not fail, Mr. President, to transmit to the Federal Council the sentiments which you have voiced. I wish to address to you, in addition to the Federal Council’s welcome, its wishes for the full success of your 76th session.*