

Opening address by Dr. Fred Sinowatz,
Minister of Education and Art,
representing the Federal President of the Republic of Austria

Mr. President of the International Olympic Committee,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, a few days before the opening of the 12th Winter Games, it is my pleasure to welcome you on behalf of the President of the Republic of Austria, Dr. Rudolf Kirch-

schläger, to the 77th Session of the International Olympic Committee and to the city of Innsbruck, the provincial capital of the Austrian Tyrol.

Innsbruck is the city that has been given the honour of acting as host to the Winter Games for a second time. The task with which Austria, the Tyrol and Innsbruck have been entrusted represents a special distinction for us, particularly because of the confidence thereby reflected in our ability to prepare for such a big and important sporting event within the relatively short period of barely three years: it is almost three years ago to the day that the choice of the IOC fell on Innsbruck. We in Austria are grateful for this decision of 4th February 1973, and we can now state that all possible measures have been taken to enable the 12th Winter Games to be opened on 4th February 1976.

In the persuance of this difficult and responsible task, all our actions have been guided by our obligation to the Olympic idea. That is to say that we, in our honest endeavours, have tried to create the best conditions under which winter sportsmen from the whole world can compete against each other to the satisfaction of all. In so doing, our main concern has been not just to achieve technical perfection, which for us is merely an organisational sine qua non, but above all to propagate the humane character of this great event and to create at the same time that peculiarly Austrian atmosphere that constitutes the responsiveness of a small country in the heart of Europe towards the rest of the world. Our aim has been to show that in this day and age smaller countries can also shoulder Olympic responsibility.

Our age has little taste for the pathos of those early years when the Olympic Games were revived. Words have changed their meaning, and the whole world is caught in a dynamic development such as was never known in the past. Since 1894, the year in which this International Olympic Committee was founded, the field of sport has also been increasingly confronted with the multifarious phenomena of political and social processes.

In the world of sport a wealth of possibilities, some cheering, some threatening, have crystallised, with the result that sport has become a social challenge for our age. But it is precisely in the Olympic Games, whose rhythm only war has managed to disturb, that the positive aspects in the development of sport are revealed: sport has overcome its exclusive character in society and has contributed greatly to the establishment of the principle of international equality; sport has helped to overcome political barriers and to conquer shameful prejudice. We must freely admit, however, that new dangers have arisen, dangers that cannot be ignored. But let us not trust only in words of condemnation; rather we should strive by words and deeds to find a solution to these problems, though in an age of such rapid social change there can be no momentary solution that will remain valid for all time; there can only be unceasing labours for meaningful reforms. For you too, ladies and gentlemen, as representatives of the International Olympic Committee, the result of these considerations is an extremely difficult task, but also—in view of the splendid history of the Games—a fascinating one. For my part, I am convinced that throughout the world all those who subscribe to the Olympic idea in the spirit of our age appreciate the significance of this challenge.

We Austrians, however, hoping to prove our Olympic mettle as hosts to the Games for a second time, welcome you to Innsbruck and wish you a successful outcome in your discussions.

And with these words of welcome, on behalf of the President of Austria, I declare the 77th Session of the International Olympic Committee open.

F. S.

