



Lord Killanin in Algiers, 10th July 1978

Speech by the President of the IOC at the meeting of the Supreme Council for sport in Africa

Mr. President, at this 8th Session of your Council, which precedes the third African Games in Algiers, I would like to thank you for the opportunity which has been given to me to meet the sports administrators from National Olympic Committees, from the confederations and from the Sports Ministries, and I hope during the next few days to have an opportunity of meeting many of you individually and naturally I will be happy to endeavour to facilitate anyone who wishes to make an appointment with me. I am very happy to be back in Algiers, of which I have happy recollections of the Mediterranean Games in 1975.

I hope also to contribute clarification on points where there may have been, or may be in the future, misunderstanding.

As President of the International Olympic Committee, whose members are the heirs to the Olympic movement started by Baron Pierre de Coubertin at the Sorbonne conference in 1894 which resulted in the first neo-Olympic Games in Athens in 1896, it has always been my endeavour to think in terms not only of the Olympic Games, but of the Olympic movement, with its basic principle of non-discrimination in regard to politics, race or religion. Also to endeavour to co-operate in every way not only with the high performance sports competitions, but also with those who are developing through both governmental and non-governmental organisations, sport throughout the world.



Mr. Abraham Ordia, President of the SCSA, Mr. Djamal Houhou, Algerian Minister of Sport, Lord Killanin (left to right).

There are over 130 recognised National Olympic Committees which, although basically the same in that the rules are in accordance with IOC rules, in point of fact vary from committee to committee. This is inevitable, for there are certain countries in which sport has long been practised, which inspired Baron de Coubertin in the creation of the Olympic movement, while there are others where it is comparatively new.

Not only do conditions vary from Olympic committee to Olympic committee, but also from continent to continent.

The continent of Africa requires special consideration and help, which should be not of a patronising nature but constructive. This can be achieved by the closest co-operation between those organising sport and physical development in their various territories, the International Federations and National Olympic Committees, and of course, the International Olympic Committee itself and government departments responsible.

I am fully conscious, as we all are, that in Africa there is a very large number of states which have obtained their independence since the end of the last war, with different economic situations and historic traditions.

I would like to remind you that, although I stand here as a neutral in an effort to obtain the closest co-operation and co-ordination, I do in point of fact come from an old country, the greater part of which only obtained its independence in 1922. Although Irishmen took part in the Olympic Games in the British team in 1896, it was not until later that we were able to appear under our own colours.

For some 22 years I was President of a National Olympic Committee and it is from that viewpoint that I learned about the

Olympic movement, bearing in mind that National Olympic Committees are composed of national federations affiliated to the recognised International Federations. There are also representatives of sportsmen from newly independent countries which will be welcome to the Olympic world.

Governments and sport

May I reiterate the theme, which some of you heard me express when I was invited by the Director-General of UNESCO to the meeting in Paris in April 1976. I believe in the closest co-operation with the various government departments whether they be sports departments, education departments, or indeed other government agencies which may have sports interests. It is essential to protect the freedom of the individual in regard to any form of discrimination, whether racial, political or religious, and the duty of governments to assist.

On your vast continent the situation varies in that you have some National Olympic Committees which have a long history, but the majority are of recent creation and the number of sports practised in the various countries is limited through what may have been inherited or which are practical.

It is quite natural that the new leaders of these countries should take a particular interest and their efforts should be encouraged. At the same time, I believe it is possible in moments of ultra-nationalism, that individual sportsmen can risk being the victims and not the beneficiaries of development. There is a great difference between chauvinism and patriotism.

The attitude of the Tripartite Commission, which was made a permanent Commission after the Varna Congress, has been issued and no doubt will be discussed by the General Assembly of National Olympic Committees next year. It was necessary, for reasons of policy and speed, to make the position absolutely clear and I am delighted to have the closest co-operation and understanding with the Director-General of UNESCO on this matter. We have been able to clarify a large number of points on which there is complete mutual agreement.

I would only issue a word of warning about those who would like to see the control of competitive sport pass into the hands of UNESCO and governmental

bodies. There are, I know, some of you here who take this view, but the view of the IOC is that whilst it is essential for governments to develop physical education and their people's health from the cradle to the grave, competitive sport is best left in the hands of the International Federations, National Olympic Committees, and, as far as the Olympic movement is concerned, the International Olympic Committee.

Words are frequently loosely used, words such as "democracy". This can be counter-productive. I personally believe strongly in democracy but it must be efficient. I prefer to see the evolution of the Olympic movement taking place as it is at the moment, with greater representation of IOC members across the world, and already, as you know, the IOC is up to 89 members.

When I was elected a member of the IOC in 1952, there were 3 NOCs in Africa and 3 members of the IOC. There are now 36 recognised NOCs and 14 IOC members. Democracy in sport means the availability of sport for all and to all. It is, however, natural, if governments provide finance, that they should have the right to ensure that these facilities are used to the maximum and that funds are not misapplied.

Amateurism

I know that on your agenda you may consider this and I would remind you that the eligibility rules for the Olympic Games have been very much liberalised. One of the problems of this liberalisation is that frequently the less well-endowed countries are the sufferers, because they are unable to find the financial assistance which is necessary for the training, travelling and expenses of their top athletes.

This brings me to the question of commercialisation.

The expense of sporting facilities and competition is a subject in which we are all closely concerned.

It is possible in certain regimes that the state takes care of everything. This, on the other hand, is impossible under other regimes, where assistance is sought from commercial sponsorship. This is not available everywhere and requires careful study to endeavour to give people equal opportunity.

Through the programme of Olympic Solidarity we are endeavouring to assist.

Olympic Solidarity

The IOC Olympic Solidarity Commission consists of the panel of advisers of the Council of the General Assembly of the NOCs, together with certain additional persons nominated by myself, as President of the IOC, from National Olympic Committees whom we believe can be of assistance to this programme on a world-wide basis. Unfortunately, for administrative reasons, courses were cancelled on the continent of Africa, and there is still some discussion on what is the best method of assistance, as the finance is not limitless. Those sums we may have received from television rights in Moscow cannot be used until the flame goes out, as should the Games not take place, for any reason, these sums are returnable in dollars, to those who have made the advances.

It has been suggested that some of the courses are too advanced for certain National Olympic Committees on this continent. I know, from speaking to some of you, that there is a feeling that some of the support has been patronising and I even heard the word "neo-colonialisation" being mentioned. Certainly this is not the intention and it is by dialogue that we shall obtain the best results.

Unfortunately, we do not have the large sums, when looked at from a world point of view, to construct facilities. All we can do is assist by running courses, whether of a general nature such as on administration, sports medicine, or whether of a technical nature, which must be done in close co-operation with the International Federations.

Further, many of the great countries, for altruistic motives (and indeed possibly political ones as well), are prepared, in the countries which are developing, to assist. The closest co-operation is necessary to avoid waste and overlap.

Because of an administrative urgency, the organisation of Olympic Solidarity, which is a department of the IOC, has been working with the assistance of the Italian Olympic Committee in Rome. It is now intended to remove this to the direct environment of the International Olympic Committee and appoint an administrator.

Again, I must remind you, the situation varies on every continent and within the NOCs on each continent, and, further, there are arguments for and against the regionalisation of this aid.

The greater part of the income comes from the United States of America, which has three separate competitive national television networks, compared to most of us, who live in countries where broadcasting is either a state or semi-state responsibility. This is the reason why the unions of broadcasters are able to keep their payments for the purchase of television rights, because they are unionised in order to restrict competition for rights. These conflicts of interest are paramount and there is, to my mind, no instant solution. Also, the question of world-wide television transmission is becoming increasingly expensive and is the responsibility of the host country. This leads me on to the cost of the Games.

Cost of the Games

Unfortunately, the Olympic movement, through the publicity given to the capital expenditure in Montreal, especially of the stadium, village and equestrian centre, has led to adverse comment. Further, there is no doubt that with 21 sports now on the programme, and new sports which are on the programmes of Regional Games and anxious to be on the programme of the Olympic Games, there is also the pressure for increased women's participation. This means that the requirements for facilities become greater and greater which means an increase of costs which is one of our principal anxieties. Between the two wars, a small country (like mine) could possibly have financed and staged the Olympic Games. We know that is not now possible without assistance. On the other hand, here in Algiers the Mediterranean Games have been staged and now the African Games are due to commence which indicates possibilities.

It is up to all of us to endeavour to keep these costs down. The International Federations are fully cognisant of this and are prepared to co-operate in every way, although at times the demands, especially by some individuals, become excessive. At the same time, whilst one wishes to give the athletes the best possible conditions under which to compete, including periods between competition when they are in the village, it is essential again that the National Olympic Committees, the individuals and the media must not be too demanding. Otherwise, they will finally kill international competition, especially in the case of the Olympic Games and the important Regional Games.

Regional Games

These are of the greatest importance, for whether they are continental or sub-continental, chances are given to many to compete in the years between the Olympic Games and to prepare themselves, and also to many who, for reasons of international standards or expenses, might not be able to compete in their sport on the Olympic programme.

The IOC gives its patronage and has encouraged these Games although it has led us into problems. At the recent Session in Athens, the conditions laid down for patronage of the Games, as described in the Olympic Rules and Regulations as agreed in Helsinki in 1952 were cancelled and Rule 68 now reads :

“The IOC may grant its patronage to international, regional, continental or world multi-sports competitions on condition that they comply with Rule 24 of these Rules and the Olympic principles.”

This will mean in future that each Games' Organising Committee will apply for patronage and the patronage will be given on the basic understanding that the Games do not violate the Olympic principles, forbidding discrimination on grounds of race, religion and politics, and are also conducted in compliance with the rules of the International Federations, which not only include technical rules but also the correct affiliation of competitors. Licences for the competitions are the prerogative of each International Federation.

Summary

I apologise for being long but as I said at the beginning I hope to have an opportunity of meeting many people during my stay in Algiers, and also, as is known by our President and Secretary General, it is my intention for further understanding and collaboration to visit as many countries as possible on the continent of Africa in the near future. When I cannot go, because I am not a superman, I will delegate authority to members of the IOC to visit these so we can have the closest collaboration and understanding.

I wish your Assembly every success in its discussions, which I hope will be creative and positive and that the development of sport and the Olympic spirit can be maintained throughout Africa.

L.K.

