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## COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE AT THE SORBONNE

On Tuesday 18th December 1984 at 11.30 am at the Sorbonne, H.E. Mr. Juan Antonio Samaranch, President of the International Olympic Committee, and Mrs. Helene Ahrweiler, Rector of the Academy and Chancellor of the Paris Universities, led the inauguration ceremony for the plaque commemorating the 90th anniversary of the International Olympic Committee, celebrated on the same spot on the 1st of June last year.

Present at the ceremony were the Vice-Presidents of the IOC, Mr. Alexandru Siperco and Mr. Berthold Beitz, the Director Mrs. Monique Berlioux, and Mr. Maurice Herzog. The ceremony was also attended by various personalities from the French sports scene, led by Mr. Alain Calmat, Minister for Sports : Mr. Nelson Paillou and Claude-Roger Cartier, President and Secretary General of the CNOSF, Roland Boitelle and Robert Busnel, Presidents of the International Fencing and Basketball Federations and a delegation of representatives from the French cities making a bid for the 1992 Games.

In the august yet familiar surroundings of the Octave-Gréard Hall, antichamber of the Great Amphitheatre where the Baron de Coubertin had reawakened sleeping Olympism and given it a new lease of life, and under the immortal gaze of the celebrants of the jubilee of Pasteur, hanging on the

wall, Mr. Samaranch recalled the actions of a "young Frenchman", who had "overcome all obstacles and kindled universal enthusiasm in order to bring back to life, in his own words, 'an institution several thousand years old', a major component of the cultural and social heritage of humanity".

Mrs. Helene Ahrweiler and Mr. Samaranch then unveiled the commemorative plaque, the third to have been placed by the IOC on the walls of the Sorbonne.

### THE OLYMPIC ORDER FOR Mrs. AHRWEILER

At the end of this short ceremony, in the nearby debating hall, and, this time, under the gaze of the magnificent portrait of Richelieu by Philippe de Champaigne, the President of the IOC presented Mrs. Ahrweiler with the insignia of the Olympic Order.

Mrs. Monique Berlioux, called upon to make a speech in praise of the recipient, underlined the exceptional qualities which had made her, a native of Greece, not only one of the great world experts on classical antiquity, especially Byzantium, but also the holder of one of the highest offices in the University.

Taking up the allusion to her original nationality, Mrs. Ahrweiler admitted that her dual ties to Greece and to France had to some extent "predestined" her to rub shoulders with Olympism. Olympia, she said, had presented her with the opportunity for lovely walks as a girl and for the physical discovery "with my fingertips and the palms of my hands" of the statue of Olympian Apollo. She recounted her astonishment when she learned as a young girl that it was a Greek who, having ascended the throne of the known world, pronounced the death sentence of the Olympic Games, and the second surprise she experienced on learning that the flame had been lit once more, fifteen centuries after the Edict of Theodosius, in the very University of the Sorbonne. where mischievous chance and the necessities of her discipline had brought her.

There is no doubt that Mrs. Ahrweiler was imbued with the Olympic spirit.

