

ON STAGE, ATHLETES !

The curtain is about to go up on the XVth Olympic Winter Games. The athletes, limbering up in the wings, have performed their final rehearsals and are ready to take up their rightful places centre-stage, eagerly awaited by an audience of millions. The lime-light is theirs, but also the burden they have shouldered : to give of their best, for a once-in-a-lifetime performance. As the world's sporting elite, they are role-models for youth everywhere, setting the standards for it to follow. I send them every encouragement and best wishes for success.

The Games are not a simple question of individual excellence. Win or lose, all the athletes have their part to play. Their number has grown since Sarajevo with the entry of several NOCs new to snow and ice sports, each determined to participate, each adding to the strength of the Olympic movement, extending its boundaries a little further.

The key to a successful show is a strong cast list. This is assured for Calgary and, now that a massive hundred and sixty-one NOCs have responded with a resounding "yes" to our invitation to the Games in Seoul in September, we feel that the unity of our movement is re-asserting itself, and that the unstinting joint efforts of the IOC and all the members of our large Olympic family have been amply rewarded. We shall miss that small number of athletes who will lose their opportunity to perform alongside the best in the world and we will always remain ready to welcome them.

Such a unanimous positive reply is also a tribute to the work of Olympic Solidarity, which has systematically provided education, training and financial support to all over the past four years. Most importantly, this reply is a mandate for it to continue its task at full-level over the next Olympiad, extending the development of sport worldwide and nurturing the Olympians of the future.

When we think of the performances that these top-level athletes have prepared for the world, we should also have a look back-stage. The principal actors have a right to demand the best stage facilities and OCO'88 has more than risen to the challenge, as has SLOOC in Seoul. Today's heroes are also only as good as those who support them : their trainers, their clubs, their federations, their doctors : a part of the triumph belongs to these.

The celebration of the Games in front of a world-wide audience does not brook imperfection. In this respect especial thanks go to the media for continually finding new and improved ways of presentation. The highest expectations of the Games harness the collective will to produce results previously thought impossible. Before its nomination as an Olympic city, Calgary possessed none of the world-class facilities it boasts today; the face of Seoul too has been significantly altered.

Calgary has done the athletes proud. Seoul is ready to do the same. It is no less than they deserve. Let us call them out !



**Juan Antonio
Samaranch**
President of the IOC

