

**WELCOME BY
Mr NELSON PAILLOU,
PRESIDENT OF THE
FRENCH NATIONAL
OLYMPIC AND SPORTS
COMMITTEE**



We are delighted to have this opportunity to tell the President, His Excellency Juan Antonio Samaranch, and the ladies and gentlemen of the IOC, how deeply the French Olympic Committee appreciates the honour and friendship they have shown us in choosing the candidature put forward by Albertville's bid committee, and entrusting us with the organization of the XVI Olympic Winter Games. It is thanks to this generous decision that we have the pleasure of hosting the 98th Session of the UC today.

More even than by the heartwarming confidence this represents, we are touched by the homage it pays to the Frenchman Pierre de Coubertin on the centenary of his declaration at the Sorbonne in favour of a revival of the Olympic Games. This brilliant admirer of the Ancient Greeks needed rare conviction and pugnacity to persuade a sceptical, even ironic, establishment that the best way to promote sport was to give it international status by breathing new life into the Games of antiquity, which after 12 centuries of glory, had spent a further 15 centuries consigned to oblivion, since 393 A.D., by Emperor Theodosius I.

Having watched the organization develop over the last six years, I am convinced that our COJO, conceived, motivated and directed by its presidents, Michel Barnier and Jean-Claude Killy, will give you satisfaction, as long as no unforeseeable problems arise from outside.

I should also like to tell you what a precious source of support our fraternal relationship with the Spanish Olympic Committee and COOB'92 has proved to be.

In the name of the French Olympic Committee, I extend a very warm welcome to you. We are constantly at your disposal, to ensure that your stay in France fulfills all expectations. We wish you all the best in your tasks, and through our total confidence and sincere acknowledgement of your tireless pursuit of a major undertaking, we assure you of our true friendship.



**SPEECH BY
H.E. JUAN ANTONIO
SAMARANCH, PRESIDENT
OF THE INTERNATIONAL
OLYMPIC COMMITTEE**

It is always a great joy for my colleagues and me to find ourselves on French soil. Especially as it is your magnificent mountains that will be hosting the sixteenth Olympic Winter Games this year,

First and foremost, we are gathered here today to celebrate an anniversary and, the most fundamental thing for us, the birth of the modern Olympic idea. Exactly one century ago, in 1892, in the austere setting of the Sorbonne in Paris, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, aged twenty-nine, proposed the revival of the Olympic Games.

At a colloquy of a type frequent at the time, a tradition that has lived on, Coubertin was talking about physical exercise in the modern world.

He concluded his talk thus: "Let us export oarsmen, runners, fencers: that is the free trade of the future, and the day it is introduced into the mores of old Europe, the cause of Peace will receive new and powerful reinforcements..."

"That is enough to encourage me now to think of the second part on my programme; I hope that you will help me there, as you have helped me before, and that with you I shall be able to pursue and implement on a basis in keeping with the conditions of modern life this grandiose and beneficial work: the restoration of the Olympic Games".

I have often imagined this autumn evening and this appeal launched to the world. I have read and re-read the memoirs of Pierre de Coubertin. I have thought about his doubts, his hopes, his enthusiasm and his need to be heard. His feelings have a familiar ring today: "I had foreseen every eventuality, except what actually happened", he wrote. "Opposition? Objections, irony? Or even indifference? Not at all. Everyone applauded, approved and wished me every success. But no one had really understood. A period of total incomprehension had begun. It was to last a long time".

A century has elapsed. A history marked by alternate tragedy and hope. But the Olympic Movement has gone on developing, growing stronger, offering the world its ideal of peace and human brotherhood. And all of us, heirs to the philosophy of Baron de Coubertin, can tell him that we have continued his work, even if we have to start afresh each morning. With modesty, as no achievement endures forever. Olympism demands a daily reassessment in the light of changes in society and the vicissitudes of politics.

The past year has seen the number of National Olympic Committees rise to a record of one hundred and seventy. We are feeling the effects of the wind of freedom that is blowing across our planet, a phenomenon we often helped to create. For instance, we have witnessed the return of the three Baltic countries, Latvia, Estonia

and Lithuania, whose National Olympic Committees we readmitted last September, in Berlin, which is a symbol in itself. And their athletes will be taking part, under their national colours, in the forthcoming competitions which Savoy, with its tradition of hospitality, has been responsible for organizing.

We were also happy to be able to bring back South Africa. The IOC expelled the South African National Olympic Committee in 1970 after refusing to let its athletes take part in the Games from 1964 onwards. The apartheid policy was in violation of the "Olympic Charter", of which non-discrimination is an essential principle. Happily, this policy has been abolished, and the IOC Session in Birmingham in June was able to respond to this fact.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank on behalf, of you all, our Vice-President Judge Kéba Mbaye for the outstanding role he has played as Chairman of the Apartheid and Olympism Commission. We know what an asset his French legal training, steeped in the tradition of human rights, has been to him.

Let me remind you here of the almost filial attachment the Olympic Movement feels for France. In two years' time, the Paris Congress will celebrate in turn the centenary of the founding of the IOC, which enabled Coubertin's ideas to take shape in an institution which still lives on. And the Congress will provide us with an opportunity to reflect on how we can tackle (with full confidence) the third millennium, and to outline our principal policies.

I know how carefully the French National Olympic Committee is preparing the Congress, and I should like to express our gratitude to them. The humanistic concerns of its President, my friend Nelson Paillou, are a guarantee of its success.

We contemplate the future of Olympism with serenity, thinking of our motto, a motto which we also owe to France.

Our most important concern is, as always, to maintain the unity of the Olym-



pic Movement, united around the values which inspire the IOC. Therein lies the strength of our Movement. If we were unfortunate enough to lose this unity, Olympism would face real dangers. Its very existence would be seriously threatened.

So, here at these Winter Games, an event which grows more universal each time, I take the opportunity to say once more that the IOC alone is nothing.

It draws its moral force from an entire Movement, of which it is the leader. Rather like the leader of a group of climbers roped together, if I may use an image doubtless familiar to you as mountaineers. We support the International



The Co-Presidents of the COJO of Albertville-Savoy 92, Messrs Michel Barnier and Jean-Claude Killy, welcome the IOC President as he arrives at the skating rink in Courchevel's Forum.

Federations and the National Olympic Committees, as they support us.

It was in order to strengthen our Movement still further that the IOC opted for an autonomous cycle for winter sports. This year, in 1992, we are witnessing for the last time the dual celebration of the Olympic Winter Games and the Olympic Summer Games in Albertville and Barcelona, two cities linked by many affinities and a common culture. And where the mountains and the sea join hands.

In 1994, we shall find ourselves in Lillehammer, Norway, for the Olympic Winter Games. In future, the acknowledged specificity of the Olympic Winter Games, which, in accordance with the Charter, will still include only those disciplines practised on snow and ice, should enable the Winter Olympics to come into their own. As with the Summer Games, the host cities will be appointed seven years in advance, rather than five years and a few months as was the case with Albertville, for example. We are also envisaging the possibility of holding these future Games in several regions or even in more than one country, but with one city given overall responsibility for the project. This would help to lighten the burden of organizing events requiring very heavy infrastructures in difficult climatic and geological conditions. The Albertville COJO will have served us well by opening up new possibilities. In choosing the Savoy town and the whole Tarentaise valley behind it, the IOC knew what it was letting itself - and the organizers - in for. After entrusting the organization of the Games to major cities like Sarajevo and Calgary, it was time to try a return to the very heart of nature.

The team, made up of Michel Barnier, Jean-Claude Killy and Jean-Albert Corrand, which emerged already formed from the bid, a rare occurrence, has coped. It has met the challenge in what was, after all, a very short time, despite all the problems it has had to face: problems of a political, economic and logistical nature. We congratulate them most warmly.

It was certainly not easy to hold together an organization covering thirteen sites and 1,600 square kilometres, especially given the geological difficulties inherent to the high-mountain terrain.

When he inaugurated COJO's headquarters on 1st June 1989, the President of the French Republic, Mr François Mitterrand, congratulated you on taking up the challenge. On having the courage to do so. On taking risks to master what, at the outset, he said, could have been considered as a rash undertaking. The Olympics

are all about excelling oneself. You have understood that, and helped those around you to understand it.

There is ultimately and above all, it seems to me, one key idea which has guided you in your conception of the Olympic organization, namely that of sharing. You wanted to create Games for athletes, and to achieve that, they were prepared by athletes. Among those around Jean-Claude Killy, who is seeking to give to others what he himself received, there are countless winners of Olympic or world championship medals. From Perrine Pelen, in charge of the Olympic villages, to Jean-Paul Pierrat, in charge of the cross-country courses, or Guy Périllat, Killy's friendly rival at Grenoble, Léo Lacroix, Georges Mauduit and their mentor, Mr Honoré Bonnet.

The IOC is grateful to you for your constant concern to get the Olympic message across: to the 1992 young people from all over the world who have been here under the Youth of the World programme launched during the Bid; to all the schoolchildren who have learned about the Olympics at their primary schools; to your eight thousand volunteers, specially trained by means of the most modern computer-aided methods, set up by COJO. And you have made tireless efforts in tracing the runs to make them more spectacular for the sake of two thousand million television viewers. To give them Games such as they have never seen before.

Co-Presidents Barnier and Killy, dear friends, you wanted Winter Games which would belong to the mountains, in keeping with your most profound traditions. And here, once again, we come full circle. After all, did not our founder Pierre de Coubertin choose an Alpine site for the IOC headquarters, three-quarters of a century ago? In Lausanne where he now rests, so close to Albertville. And you are working to preserve these magnificent mountains by protecting their flora and fauna, as in the superb national park of La Vanoise, which is right on our doorstep.

I know that the expert from the International Ski Federation, former Olympic champion Bernhard Russi - yet another in your team - went out of his way to alter the line of the Olympic downhill. Why? Quite simply to spare a single flower, a columbine, which has become extremely rare in the Alps. Well, I can confide in you that we in Lausanne have the same concerns. And we adapted the plans of the future Olympic museum to preserve a tree, a hundred-year-old oak. As we enter the third millennium, the IOC's primary concern will be to ensure that the environment is respected. We have decided that, in the report on candidate cities, there will be a whole section devoted to the ecological impact of the organization to be set up. This will be taken into account when the vote is held.

Also, I have asked the planners of the 1994 Olympic Congress in Paris to be sure to give the important issue of the environment a place of the agenda. The Olympic Movement has a very clear position on the subject; we are very deeply attached to nature. Our entire culture is rooted in it. It is and has always been in nature that sport can thrive most happily. This is especially true of snow and ice sports. Hence the constant and stubborn fight the Olympic Movement is conducting against doping and all unnatural interventions, anything that threatens the athletes' integrity.

I now return to Coubertin, for my conclusion. During the Closing Ceremony of the first Winter Olympics in Chamonix in 1924, he asserted boldly that :

"Winter Sports are among the purest of all, and that is why I, for my part, have so longed to see them taking a permanent place in Olympic events. They will help us to watch over the sporting ideal and shield it from harm".

We rely on each of you to make your own contribution to that endeavour.