



*Mrs Edith Cresson, Prime Minister of the French Republic being unable to attend, this speech was given by Mrs Frédéque Bredin, Minister of Youth and Sports.*

**P**lease allow me to begin by saying how delighted I am to be here as you open your session. I am here because the XVI Olympic Winter Games are due to open in Albertville in a few days' time. With the people of Savoy, all France is proud to welcome you and the entire Olympic family.

We are mindful of the honour you have done us in choosing Albertville and Savoy, and we have everything in our power, and shall go on doing so, to show ourselves worthy. That, at any rate, is my wish as I speak before the assembled organizers of this great event, and in particular the two co-chairmen of the Organizing Committee of the Games, Messrs Barrier and Killy.

I am sure you will understand why, in 1992, I feel moved to pay tribute to that great Frenchman, Pierre de Coubertin, who was also a great citizen of the world.

For it was a hundred years ago, on November 25, 1892, that Pierre de Coubertin, speaking in the main lecture theatre of the Sorbonne in Paris, called for the "Revival of the Olympic Games."

"There are," he said, "you call people utopists when they speak of ridding the world of war, and you are not altogether mistaken, but there are others who believe in gradually diminishing the risks of war, who are not considered utopists". Recalling how much "the telegraph, the railway, the telephone, the passionate quest for knowledge, congresses and exhibitions" have contributed to peace, the founder and first President of the International Olympic Committee exclaimed: "Well I do! My hope is that sport will do even more than that".

Ours has been a harsh century, neither scientific progress, nor the development of cultural and sporting exchanges, have sufficed to ensure peace. Sometimes even, they have been diverted from their goal. That is one more reason, in an uncertain and sometimes troubled world, to recall the hope and also the undying desire for peace that inspires the Olympic movement, of which you are the trustees.

I know how unstintingly you work to uphold the heritage of the Olympic ideal and breathe life into it in today's world. The President of the French National Olympic Committee. Mr Nelson Paillou, whom you have entrusted with the task of organizing the Centenary Congress in 1994, never misses an opportunity to remind the French authorities of that with vigour and great learning. He is your interpreter, and I thank you for that reminder.

While 1992 is the year of the Centenary, it is also a crucial year for Europe. As you know, we are engaged in building a Community which, we hope, will form an area of prosperity as well as peace and stability. Consequently, we appreciate that in choosing Albertville and France for the 1992 Winter Games, and Barcelona and Spain for the Summer Games, the IOC has, in its own discreet, subtle, yet plain manner, hailed the emergence of a focus of dialogue, solidarity and peace.

Here I would like to convey to all the nations taking part in the Albertville and Savoy Games, our deep respect for each and every one of them, and to say how happy we are to see their athletes taking part in the Games under freely-chosen flags.

At the last revision of the Olympic Charter, adopted in 1990, you proposed a definition of the Olympic ideal that "exalts and mingles in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Combining sport with culture and education" you say, "the Olympic ideal seeks to create a style of life founded on joy in effort, the educational value of setting a good example, and respect for fundamental universal ethical principles".

I am convinced that this gathering of "the sporting youth of the world" which we are about to witness for fifteen days in our mountains of Savoy, will provide an opportunity for this style of life to flourish.

Our concern, which we share with all of those men and women who have contributed to the organization of the Games, has been to make the Olympic festival a

success. With that "mingled taste for excess and proportion" those twin aims said by Pierre de Coubertin to lie at the origin of the Olympic spirit.

We all know how the Games can reserve joys or sorrows for those taking part. May the victors be fully acclaimed, and the runners-up soothed by the quality and friendliness of our hospitality-that is my wish for all those men and women now readying themselves for the assault on the pistes and arenas of Savoie.

For the organizers, the search for excellence means freeing everyone involved from organizational worries. Here, a sense of proportion means preserving the human dimension of the Games.

Excellence means training and leisure facilities, fair contests organized for the benefit of all, organized in response to their needs.

It means efficient, well-organized working conditions for the press corps. Lastly, it means comfortable accommodation, competition facilities and transportation systems for all those, participants and spectators alike, who will be visiting our country during the Olympic fortnight.

The best of French and European technology has been pressed into service to improve road access, develop faster rail links with the TGV high speed train, and more efficient telecommunication systems. The demonstration of High Definition Television planned for the occasion will exemplify Europe's and France's determination to play an active part in scientific and technical progress celebrated by Coubertin.

Excellence will also be the watchword of the Olympic Arts Festival, to which artists from all over the world have been invited: painters and sculptors, musicians, dancers and actors.

But this desire for excellence and striving for achievement are meaningful only if we are capable of sharing them. That is the irreplaceable role of the media and I support the determination of your President,

H.E. Mr Juan Antonio Samaranch, to facilitate their work.

So it is imperative that everything be done to bring the spectators - many of them keen enthusiasts themselves, drawn by the prospect of an outstanding performance or the sheer beauty of sportsmen and women in motion - as close as possible to the exploit itself. It is that sense of proportion, the human dimension of the Games and the spirit of enjoyment which we must seek to uphold and we must do so not only for the spectators present here in Savoy, but also for all those people (more than two billion of them) who will be watching the Games on television.

That way, the Games will more completely fulfil their educational role. For example, an educational kit explaining the Games has been prepared for all French schoolchildren.

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have already expressed my joy and my pride in opening this new session here in Courchevel in France. It is commonplace to say that the important thing is to take part, I hope that we shall succeed in showing you, and I know that we will, that for Albertville - and through Albertville, Savoy and France - what also counts is to rise successfully to the challenge of organizing the Games. And your meeting here, in Courchevel, is very practical proof of that.

I wish you every success in your work, and every success for the XVI Olympic Winter Games of Albertville and Savoy.