

SPEECH OF H.E. JUAN ANTONIO SAMARANCH, IOC PRESIDENT

First of all, on behalf of the whole of the Olympic Movement, I would like to express our gratitude for Norway's dedication to Olympism, from the most humble citizen to Their Majesties King Harald V and Queen Sonja. I would also like to thank the government and its Prime Minister, the National Olympic Committee, one of the oldest, born at the turn of the century, and its President Arne Myhrvold. Thank you to the President and the directors of the Organizing Committee, Mr Heiberg, Mr Andenaes and Mr Roenningen, and all of their staff, with a special mention for the volunteers. Thank you to our colleagues Jan Staubo and Olaf Poulsen, and to the mayor and the citizens of the Olympic city of Lillehammer for the warm and traditional welcome they have given the Olympic family. I would now like to welcome my colleagues, IOC members, presidents and representatives of the International Federations, the National Olympic Committees, the organizing committees of the Games in Atlanta, Nagano and Sydney, all of our guests, and the media representatives.

The Session that begins today marks the start of a new cycle of Winter Games. It is the first big Olympic family gathering of the IOC's centen-

nial year, 1994, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly "International Year of Sport and the Olympic Ideal." In its forty-eighth session on the 25th October 1993, the General Assembly also adopted another resolution which is very close to our hearts: the observance of the Olympic Truce. This resolution recognizes (and I quote) "the idea of the Olympic Truce, as dedicated in ancient Greece to the spirit of fraternity and understanding between peoples, and urges Member States to take the initiative to abide by the Truce, individually and collectively, and to pursue in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations the peaceful settlement of all international conflicts". And, I might add, in conformity with the Olympic Charter.

After a century of existence, we can be proud of the work we have accomplished since our creation. Very few international institutions can show a record as positive as ours. We will be taking stock of our achievements at the Centennial Congress this year in Paris, where the IOC was created by Baron Pierre de Coubertin on the 23rd June 1894. The general framework of this Congress will be defined during the present Session. The 102nd of our history. We have been faithful to the principles bequeathed to us by the founders of our Movement, and we have adapted them to modern society, thinking above all of the athletes. Every reform we have undertaken has succeeded thanks to the unity of the Olympic movement, and thanks to the work carried out with the International Federations and the National Olympic Committees, under the aegis of the IOC and its multidisciplinary Commissions. At the end of the first Winter Games, in Chamonix 1924, Coubertin, whose wish it was to hold these Games, declared that "winter sports are some of the purest sports, and that is why I was so eager to see them take a permanent place among the Olympic

events. They will help us to watch over the sporting ideal, and keep it from harm."

Here in Lillehammer, I feel that we have returned to our roots, to relive the impressions of those first Games, marked by the exploits of the Norwegian skiers, who set the right tone. And to banish all possible doubt, I should like to confirm, in the words of the Olympic Charter, that "those sports which are practised on snow and ice are considered as winter sports"

Since the last Congress in Baden Baden in 1981, Olympism has expanded and grown stronger. The IOC experienced its greatest crisis with the boycott of the Games of the XXII Olympiad in Moscow. Only one city, Los Angeles, bid to host the 1984 Summer Games. The IOC rebuilt its strength - we cannot emphasize this enough - by reinforcing its ties with all the constituent parts of the Olympic Movement, and with the athletes. It was in Baden Baden that the Athletes' Commission was made official, and we became pioneers in this field. The IOC's concern was to place all the athletes of the world on an equal footing, whatever political or economic system they belonged to. The fundamental principle of Olympism is, after all, non-discrimination. This awareness of all the problems facing athletes has fed the IOC to fight energetically against the scourge of doping. The historic document adopted on 13th January in Lausanne by members of the Olympic family is certainly the culmination of all the efforts made to date. The regulations established by the Medical Commission, led by the Prince de Merode - the lists of prohibited substances, laboratory accreditation procedures, sanction procedures and equality of treatment between different sports - represent a concrete and positive result that deserves to be applauded.

The eligibility rules have developed in such a way that the best athletes can participate in the Games, on the

condition that they comply with the principles of the Olympic Charter. Athlete qualification remains the province of the International Federations and the National Olympic Committees. In order to protect the athlete, we have created the Court of Arbitration for Sport, and over it the International Council of Arbitration for Sport, which is independent of the IOC under the presidency of our colleague Judge Kéba Mbaye. After the reintegration of South Africa, in which the IOC played a lead-

ing role, we were pleased to be able to bring an end to its long period of exclusion from the Olympic Games. The athlete is always the first victim, and sport is held to ransom. The development of the contemporary athlete will be one of the four themes discussed at the Centennial Congress in Paris, which will precede our 103rd Session. The other themes will be: the contribution of the Olympic Movement to modern society, sport in its social context, and sport and the media.

I would like to thank our colleague Nelson Paillou and all his Paris team, who are working to ensure that this Congress, the twelfth in our history, will be a success, and to promote the ideal of humanist sport in the tradition of our founder Coubertin.

Two areas in particular have occupied the attention of the IOC, in keeping with its traditions: culture and the environment. And I know, Prime Minister, how much these values are prized by the Norwegians.

Members at the Session in Lillehammer.



and how determinedly you have fought for them yourself. Culture has, from the very beginning, been at the heart of Olympism. The Olympic Museum: which opened on 23rd June last year in Lausanne, fulfils many different needs. It is the depository of three thousand years of history, and endeavours to bring the past century, since the IOC's creation back to life, with emotional images of the Games that have reached billions of people across the five continents. But above all it fulfils

the role of study centre: a genuine Olympic university open to researchers. Its mission is an educational one: to make the whole world aware of our ideal. The "Centennial Book", which is currently being published, will for the first time tell the history of the IOC. It will illustrate our constant struggle, over the first 100 years of our existence, for youth and for sport. The environment is another of our primary objectives. In the questionnaire given to cities bidding to host

the Games, the IOC asks what impact the Games will have on the environment. Michel Barnier, formerly president of the Albertville Organizing Committee, has become Minister for the Environment in the French government. And we know that Lillehammer has paid very careful attention to environmental issues. We congratulate the Organizing Committee and the whole of the population. We ourselves were led to change the plans of the Museum, to Save a hundred-year-old oak tree. In Lillehammer we will experience the first truly ecological Games. White and green Games.

On the eve of the opening of the XVII Olympic Winter Games, in this "International Year of Sport and the Olympic Ideal", I have the honour to renew the call for the Olympic Truce. In accordance with the United Nations resolution, and supported by the moral force represented by Olympism through the ages, we urge everyone to respect this Truce, and to ensure that it is respected.

The end of my term of office as President of the International Olympic Committee is no longer very far away. I would like to consummate our work by leaving my successor a thoroughly modern organization, ready, to enter the third millennium with the changes that will allow it to meet with the best guarantees a world in constant evolution, a world where sport and the Olympic Movement will play an increasingly important role. We must therefore make the necessary structural changes. Dear colleagues, IOC members, I ask for your help. We must think of the present, but we must also look to the future, fully mindful of our great responsibility.

