

Centennial Hello

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As the Centennial Olympic Congress stands out on an ever-closer horizon, many are wondering about the import of this anniversary and are looking into the history of Olympism in general, and the Olympic Movement in particular. We should be pleased at this interest, which ranges from praise to criticism, for the reality, thus illuminated from all sides, appears in a light with contrast, as is true of every human undertaking. From this angle, it is very interesting to analyse the reactions generated by the most recent initiatives of the Olympic world, such as the protection of nature, especially at the Olympic games, support for the disabled sport, the fight against doping or, on an even wider scale, the links established with international organizations such as the UN, UNESCO or ICRC, university, arts and cultural circles and governments themselves. The recent campaigns launched for the Year of Sport and the Olympic ideal, and for the Institution, at least selectively, of a form of effective truce, the aid given and promised to the martyred Olympic city of Sarajevo, to name but a few, are ample evidence of these.

What's all this? Aren't we a long way from sport and sports practice in all forms? Is this not in blatant contradiction with the hard-fought struggle of the fathers of modern Olympism to preserve its fundamental independence from the political or economic powers?

The answer is both multiple and nuanced. It will come above all, I hope, from the great Olympic encounters scheduled over the next few years, but also from the actions undertaken in all parts of the world by the NOCs, IFs and the many partner associations of the Olympic Movement. The IOC will have the task of supporting and coordinating this veritable welter of the most diverse undertakings, so that their results correspond to the expectations they have generated.

In this "Centennial Hello", I should simply like to point out that our present Olympic adventure is great through all its success and failures because it is—or should I write when it will fully be?—an adventure lived by men and women prepared to serve a great idea: to place everywhere and for everyone sport, as Olympism conceives it, as the service of human community.

It was precisely this that Pierre Coubertin, a born educator, profoundly desired. And it was this alas, that he was unable to achieve during his lifetime, not through want of energy, perseverance, strength of persuasion or personal sacrifice, but primarily through lack of means. The mission of the heirs to his undertaking is thus clearly defined. In our disturbed world a place which is often atrocious but at the same time so interdependent in spite of these rifts, they must answer the same call as a century ago, but having now acquired the means to implement their policy. To do so, they must join forces in a modest but real way, at the highest level, with partners who also fighting within their field to institute, through so many perils, a freer, more fraternal and more peaceful world. This task is made delicate by their human nature, but it is all the more exalting for that reason. Such, in any case, is the conclusion that I have drawn from sharing in the work of a group of highly qualified university researchers whom the IOC President asked to produce on the occasion of the centenary of our Olympic institution, a three-volume work entitled **1894-1994: The International Olympic Committee—100 Years: The Concept, the President, the Achievements.**

So that this vast narrative truly attains its goals, the past work of the modern Olympic Movement, thus soon to be revealed in its multiple aspects, should therefore serve primarily to place the Olympic work of tomorrow on the right path. This new task therefore involves us all. Thus challenged, literally, in this centennial year **it's our turn now!**