



The Snowlets' camp

"The goal of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practised without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play." This fundamental principle set out in the *Olympic Charter* was the basis for the participation of 217 young people aged 15 to 20, from 51 different countries, in the international youth camp held from 4 to 19 February at the seminar facility at Nihon University in Karuizawa, 90 km from Nagano. By taking part in this camp, this group of youngsters had the opportunity to share in the Olympic Games, a festival of peace and friendship. NAOG, the Organizing Committee of the XVIII Olympic Winter Games, had designed the

Snowlets' camp around the following basic concepts:

- by participating, young people would be a part of the Olympic Games and could immerse themselves in the spirit of the Games while increasing their knowledge of the Olympic Movement as well as directly experiencing winter sports;
- the camp would be a place for young people from all over the world, and from all walks of life, to take part in exchange and enhance their understanding of other cultures;
- it would also provide all participants an opportunity to present different aspects of their own cultures while learning about others, and to initiate themselves in Japanese history and traditions;

- finally, it would be a time to meet many new people in Nagano, to help maintain the spirit of friendship among participants for the years to come, and to share the experience and ambience of this special youth camp.

For 16 days, these young women and men, who had been selected by their respective NOCs, had the chance to share the excitement of the Olympic Games in a spirit of friendship and fellowship. The themes of the camp were world solidarity and the sharing of love and peace. During their stay, the participants were able to attend difference ceremonies and competitions. In addition, as well as taking part in skiing and ice skating activities, they discovered various Japanese traditions such as the tea ceremony, *ikebana* floral arrangement, calligraphy,



Two young participants.



IOC vice president Pál Schmitt at the closing of the Snowlets' camp.

origami, and kimono wearing. Excursions, visits with Japanese families, and a guided tour of Tokyo were also on the calendar of events.

"I think I have finally understood the real meaning of the expression 'international exchange'", said Mio Sasaki, a Japanese participant.

All the participants in the Nagano international youth camp drafted a declaration for a universal society, addressed to the IOC, the NOCs and the United Nations (see inset).



Nagano Youth Declaration on Global Community

"We, the members of the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympic International Youth Camp, brought together by the Olympic Ideals, by the desire for peace, and as representatives of the youth of today and the leaders of tomorrow, do hereby declare our intention to create a truly global community in which all peoples regardless of nationality, culture, language, economic status, race, gender, physical handicap, or religious belief, will share love and share peace. We strongly believe that a well-rounded education consisting of, but not limited to, academics, extra-curricular activities, sports, cultural exchanges, and other life experiences, is imperative to fulfilling our stated goal.

"Whereas, the main problems which hinder our progress towards this goal include apathy, discrimination, a breakdown of effective communication, and education systems that are poorly suited to the challenges of our changing societies;

"Recognizing, that a lack of self-worth, resulting from the perception that an individual cannot make a difference, lead to apathy;

"Realizing, that discrimination stems from a lack of knowledge and respect for the welfare of others which can result in premature judgements and misunderstandings;

"Recognizing, that education can be a key contributor in promoting self-esteem and a broader understanding and acceptance of diverse cultures and peoples, as well as helping to break down communication barriers between people;

"It is resolved, that the following steps should be taken to encourage a commitment to a more complete education system, encompassing all life experiences, which will play a critical role in tackling these problems and creating global harmony:

"1. Children need to be encouraged to have an active involvement in sports, volunteer work, and group activities. Such activities encourage teamwork and social interaction, showing the need for human community, and inspiring positive actions.

"2. International youth programmes such as the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympic International Youth Camp promote the understanding of different cultures and beliefs. Such programmes need to be held on a regular basis and be expanded to include as many nations and regions as possible. People who participate in these programmes have a responsibility to share their increased understanding of the world with others in their community, thereby compounding the impact of their personal experiences.

"3. Individual in every community must agree to go beyond superficial differences and settle problems peacefully by talking and acting on substantive ideas. All people, regardless of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, need to recognize the dignity and worth of every human being, and show goodwill in their dealings with other people.

"4. Multilingual education must be a part of every education system, and language must be taught as a tool of communication, not simply as an academic endeavour. An effective multilingual education must include various cultural exchanges, as language is an integral part in every culture.

"5. A well-rounded education must be made available to each person with opportunities to strengthen human community and understanding on a local, national and international level. All people, at all levels, play an important part in the creation of such a community.

"Made in Nagano, Japan, on the 17th of February 1998."