

Olympic Day and a culture of peace

In the framework of the year 2000 being proclaimed "International Year for the Culture of Peace" by the United Nations General Assembly, the IOC invited all NOCs to devote Olympic Day to promoting peace and the respect of the Olympic Truce. Some NOC initiatives have already been mentioned in an article in the August-September edition of the *Olympic Review*. Here are some others.

In Luanda, Angola, the NOC presided by Rogerio Torres Cerveira Nunes da Silva organized a symbolic walk for peace. Held with the support of various youth associations and the national political authorities, this walk through the streets of the capital brought together some 2,000 people of all ages to illustrate the peace-making and social role which sport can play in bringing communities

by Sylvie Espagnac



together and promoting understanding and national unity.

In *Cambodia*, the NOC presided by My Samedy, organized a 2.5 km walk for peace in Phnom Penh, parallel to the Olympic Day Run. Accompanied by a band and watched by around 6,000 spectators lining the route, 500 people took part in this walk, which started and finished at the national Olympic Stadium.

In *Guinea-Bissau*, athletes from the

basketball, football, handball, volleyball, wrestling, athletics, tennis, boxing and cycling federations strongly supported the walk for peace held in all regions of the country by the NOC and its president, Augusto Bernardo Viegas Jr. Some 250 children and teenagers took part in the walk in the capital, Bissau. At the end of the day, tribute was paid to the African wrestling champions in the presence of various personalities from politics and sport, including Deputy Prime Minister Faustino Fudut Imbali, and the Secretary of State for Youth, Culture and Sport, Joaquim Baldé.

A large crowd including members of the government and various ministries, sports personalities and athletes gathered on 23 June at the Olympic stadium in Nouakchott for a walk for peace, respect of the Olympic Truce and against poverty and the use of substances harmful to the health of athletes and young people. During the walk organized by the NOC of *Mauritania*, presided by Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Mah, the participants carried olive wreaths. Doves were also released by the Minister for Public Office, Labour, Youth and Sport, Baba Ould Sidi; the National Education Minister, Sghair Ould M'Bareck; the Minister for Trade, the Craft Industry and Tourism, Ahamdy Ould Hamadi; the Secretary of State for Women's Issues, Mintata Mint Hideid; and the secretaries general of, among others, the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and Public Office.

This year in *Rwanda*, Olympic Week was held in Butare, capital of the southern region of the country, and focused on the culture of peace and



The walk for peace in Luanda under the Olympic banner.

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combatting discrimination and the exclusion of people suffering from AIDS. Those attending a conference on Olympism included the NOC President, Gédéon Rudahunga; the President of the Sports Journalists Association, Jean Butoyi; the President of the Women's Football Association; and the President of the Disabled Athletes Association. On the programme were tennis, chess, swimming, table tennis, handball, karate, basketball, volleyball, football, athletics and boxing. At the prize-giving ceremony, attended by numerous personalities from politics and sport, the Minister of Territorial Administration, representing the government, recalled that *"Sport has another, more social than individual purpose. It unites, overcoming differences and breaking down cultural, ethnic and racial barriers. From this perspective, sport is very useful to our society, which has long been marked by separatist political ideologies. This social purpose of sport goes beyond the national context to become a valuable instrument of understanding between peoples. This is why, immediately after the war, when the country was struggling to recover from its agonies, we firmly supported the holding of international sports encounters in our country. Because the hoped-for result, namely communion with other peoples, was worth far more than the effort expended. After all, sport is a valuable means of fostering a true culture of peace. This is why we unreservedly support respect for the Olympic Truce, and call on the Rwandan sports movement to promote the culture of peace and fair*



The participants walking in Phnom Penh.



Releasing doves in Nouakchott.



One of the Olympic Week banners in Rwanda.

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play. Long live Sport! Long live Peace! Long live understanding between peoples!" The messages promoted during this Week were essentially the culture of peace, the fight against AIDS and inclusion of those with the disease. The many banners on display around Butare. Eleven journalists from the written,

spoken and visual media were in Butare to cover this festival of sport which, if it were held in every region of the country, would not only help to promote union and reconciliation among Rwandans but would also encourage a taste for sport and the culture of peace among the entire population of Rwanda.

Three villages in *Slovakia*, Trencin, Liptovsky Mikulas and Dolny Ohaj, hosted a total of 678 walkers for peace on the initiative of the NOC, presided by Frantisek Chmelar. In Trencin, 62 participants joined up with the Czech colleagues for a day on the Slovak-Czech border.

Masses of young children took part in the Olympic Day celebrations in Damascus, organized by the NOC of the *Syrian Arab Republic*, presided by Nouri Bakarat. A swimming gala with races, water polo matches and synchronized swimming competitions on the programme brought together some 900 children between the ages of 9 and 13. There were also 200 children competing in the gymnastics events. Finally, some 40 people, divided into two groups, joined in the cycling race which, along with the other events on the programme, attracted large numbers of spectators.

In *Vanuatu*, the walk for peace through Port Vila included the Head of State, John Bennett Bani; the First Lady, Charity Bani; Prime Minister Barak Tame Sope and his wife Mildred Sope; the speaker of the Parliament; and various Government Ministers and the NOC President Joe B. Carlo. At the finish line in the capital's Central Park, the Head of State read out the joint message from the IOC and the United Nations, while in his speech the Prime Minister emphasized the theme of peace and unity. Runners in the Olympic Torch Relay of the Games of the XXVII Olympiad in Sydney also took part in the walk, and a banner carrying a message of peace in pidgin English was produced for the occasion.



Children from Damascus at the start of the race.



(from l. to r.) The First Lady Charity Bani, Head of State of Vanuatu John Bennett Bani, Prime Minister Barak Tame Sope, Mildred Sope and Joe B. Carlo.