

Sport & Tourism



SPORT AND TOURISM

On 25 October 1999 in Lausanne, President Juan Antonio Samaranch and myself signed a cooperation agreement between the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the World Tourism Organization (WTO).

In spite of its limited scope and the modest size of the two signatory institutions, this agreement is hugely significant. It reflects the relation between and, to a large extent, the convergence of two of the most powerful driving forces of global society at the beginning of the 21st century: sport and tourism. Two forces that bring people together; two forces that typify all that is good in the globalization process underway. Sport, and in particular the Olympic Games, as the generator of events that now enjoy a blaze of publicity in the world media, events that

by Francesco Frangilli*



form a bond of common fervour between peoples that all else may divide. When Cathy Freeman - what a prophetic name! - wins medals, it is not only Australia that feels proud and more united; all the planet's forgotten communities have the impression that they too have won in respect and esteem. But tourism too, which not

only moves people in enormous numbers from one country to another - 700 million in 2000 and an estimated 1.5 billion in twenty years' time, but also brings them into contact with inhabitants of far-off countries with diverse cultures.

The cooperation initiated between the WTO and IOC - the World Conference on Sport and Tourism, held in Barcelona in February, being one of its first visible manifestations - reflects the realization that sport is one of the most rewarding ways of filling leisure time, of maintaining physical fitness and of relaxing and learning; and that it has become one of the basic motivations of tourist travel, both domestic and international. Our two institutions share the conviction that, like tourist travel, the practice of sports and international competitions help to foster a culture of



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Skiing in the 'Japanese Alps' in Nagano.

tolerance, pluralism, respect for others and, hence, of peace, a culture at once embodied in and conveyed by the Olympic Ideal and Charter and the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.

Our two organizations are also convinced that, if properly directed and practised, sport and tourism can, and should, follow the logical path to sustainable development, which was set in 1992 by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-the Earth Summit of Rio de Janeiro - and which is the stated aim of the International Year of Ecotourism to be observed in 2002. There has been much to encourage sport and tourism to draw closer together.

The major sporting events incite people to travel in ever-greater numbers; they generate considerable income for the host country, the actual impact of which has not yet been properly assessed and is therefore undervalued. Large travel companies specialize in their organization or, like Club Med, which promote new holiday forms based on the culture of sport.

These same great sporting events help in the long run to consolidate the position of leading international tourist destinations and to transform the image of the host countries. The spectacular success of the Games of the XXVII Olympiad in Sydney bore this out yet again in no uncertain terms.

Barcelona is living proof that Olympic cities and sites have become world tourist attractions in their own right; the great sports arenas are visited by more and more people, a case in point being the Stade de France near Paris, witnessed the host country's victory in the last World Cup football tournament; they are now part of the cultural heritage of the countries that built them.

It would be desirable to allow better use to be made of those facilities, created to stage international sporting events, for the benefit of both resident populations, schoolchildren and students in particular, and national or foreign visitors. I hope consideration will be given to the idea of subsequently using the sports and accommodation facilities, originally built for the Olympic Games, for tourism and leisure pur-

poses and that in future it will be one of the elements taken into account in selecting the cities that are candidates for their organization.

Last, but by no means least, the competitive spirit and the practice of sports to such high standards play an increasingly prominent role in developing leisure sports for ordinary people. They contribute to the democratization and diversification of sport and, in doing so, are a major factor of cultural fulfilment, individual and collective alike. Tennis, golf, hiking, horse-riding and water sports and activities have therefore lost the elitist label that may have been attached to them in their early stages. They encourage tourists to travel on an increasingly massive scale for the pleasure of practising them. The same applies to skiing and other winter sports, whose progress WTO gauges through the important technical conferences it holds at regular intervals in the Principality of Andorra.

The Conference held in Barcelona, an Olympic city whose urban structure was remodelled, whose society was transformed and whose economy was revived by the 1992 Games, is not merely a time of recognition and encounter for the two major economic, social and cultural activities of which we are the spokesmen. It is the point of departure of an ambitious undertaking which will encourage a great many people from all walks of life to gather and work together; it is a far-reaching venture to which the World Tourism Organization, for its part, is ready to commit itself. We are at the starting blocks impatiently waiting for the signal to start the race.

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