

THE SEARCH FOR PEACE

When Pierre de Coubertin convened the Paris Congress in 1894, which would result in the creation of the IOC and the revival of the modern Olympic Games, some of his guests were involved in the Peace Movement, and certain among them later went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Since then, the world has lived through two wars, which caused the interruption of the Olympic Games. These were followed by 'cold' and 'hot' wars, with their trail of armed conflicts and politically motivated boycotts. In 1992, the United Nations Security Council broke new ground by including sport in the framework of the sanctions against Yugoslavia. This resulted in the IOC's appeal for the observance of an Olympic Truce. The IOC President at the time, Juan Antonio Samaranch, approached the United Nations Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and launched a campaign which obtained the assent of the political world. Thus, in 1993, a resolution on the observance of the Olympic Truce during the Olympic Games was adopted unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly. Even better, on the occasion of the centenary of the IOC, founded in 1894, the Assembly proclaimed 1994 the International Year of Sport and the Olympic Ideal. From then on, the United Nations General Assembly examines a resolution on the Olympic Truce one year prior to the celebration of the Olympic Games. This is how 180 Member States, a record in the history of the United Nations, were co-sponsors of the resolution in 1999, prior to the Games of the XXVII Olympiad in Sydney, Australia. The Olympic Truce resolution, entitled "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal", is

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a symbol in favour of peace and is in no way binding. In other words, there is nothing forcing a State, or States, to respect the Truce. This is a nuance which has eluded those not entirely familiar with the subject. Despite this, the Olympic Truce has been taken into account each time, be it in 1994 during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or in 1998 during the conflict with Iraq. The Olympic Movement has never claimed to stop wars or armed conflicts. Neither the United Nations, with its Security Council and its General Assembly, nor the European Union and NATO, in spite of the military and political means at their disposal, have ever managed to guarantee world peace. The conflicts between Israel and Palestine and India and Pakistan over Kashmir, have been ongoing for over half a century. The United Nations Security Council, within which the superpowers - People's Republic of China, the United States of America, France, Great Britain and the Russian Federation - have the right of veto, sits practically every day to discuss the armed conflicts which rage throughout the world, but without finding lasting solutions. There are, moreover, two

kinds of conflict. Those where Western economic, political and geographical interests are at stake, for which we bring on the battleships, and those where conflict takes place between the poor who consume land mines and kalashnikovs, and which are taken care of by resolutions, the healing process of which is slow in coming. Also, if the abominable act of terrorism of 11 September 2001 had not taken place, we would not have heard about Afghanistan or, for that matter, Somalia. Nevertheless, the civil society, which suffers the most from all of these conflicts stirred up by political powers, continue to call everyday for peace. The IOC initiative through the Olympic Truce is part of this permanent campaign to promote peace throughout the world. It is a duty that the IOC President recalls as often as possible. The observance of the Olympic Truce, during and beyond the Olympic Games is an "appeal" by the Olympic Movement, supported by all the Member States of the United Nations, and its Secretary General. Since 1995, the IOC has requested the host country of the Olympic Games to introduce its draft resolution on the Olympic Truce to the United Nations General Assembly. Thus, the United States of America in 1995 (Atlanta 1996), Japan in 1997 (Nagano 1998) and Australia in 1999 (Sydney 2000) accepted this exercise. In 2001, it was again the turn of the United States of America, prior to the XIX Olympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City in February 2002. The usual steps were therefore undertaken with the United Nations and American diplomacy. The tragedy that occurred on 11 September altered the political scene, and obstacles arose which meant that more detailed explanations were

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required for those who were not *au fait* with the Olympic Truce. The US Department of Defense was opposed to using the word “truce”, which was understandable given the current situation, to ensure that the text of the resolution would not create an obstacle to military operations. But the Olympic Truce without the word “truce” would not have any sense. Three months of waiting and negotiations on the content of the resolution were necessary, before the amended text was finally approved the day before the meeting between the IOC President, Jacques Rogge, and President George W. Bush at the White House in Washington last November. The intervention of the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, and President Bush’s National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, with the Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, was decisive. Of course, Jacques Rogge did not miss the opportunity to discuss the Olympic Truce with George W. Bush, who confirmed to him that the United States of America would submit the draft resolution to the United Nations. The fact that the resolution was brought to the attention of the country’s highest authorities, is in itself a significant act of diplomacy for the Olympic Movement.

In contrast to the confusion created by the media, who for once took an interest in the Olympic Truce because of Afghanistan, President Rogge requested only that the related resolution be considered as usual by the United Nations General Assembly. He did not, however, speak about a ceasefire or a truce to the pursuit of terrorists throughout the world. One should not forget that the Olympic Movement has also been the victim of terrorist acts in 1972 during the Games of the XX Olympiad in Munich, Germany, when 11 Israeli athletes lost their lives, and again when a bomb exploded during the Games of the XXVI Olympiad in Atlanta in 1996, for which the person, or persons, responsible



Nagano 1998. The first appearance of the United Nations flag at the Olympic Games.

have still not been caught. War against terrorists is different from war between nations or an armed conflict on national territory.

The non-binding resolution nevertheless possesses a recognised value and was the subject of a paragraph in the final declaration of the United Nations Millennium Summit of Heads of State and Government from throughout the world in 2000. Last November, the vice-chairman of the International Olympic Truce Foundation (IOTF), Greece’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, George Papandreou, also managed to persuade the Foreign Affairs Ministers from the countries in the Balkan region to sign a declaration in favour of the Olympic Truce. In less than 48 hours, the IOC ensured that 172 Member States became co-sponsors of the draft resolution which was introduced on 11 December last by the United States delegation to the United Nations General Assembly, three months after the September tragedy. It was IOC member William Hybl, who served as public delegate for his country at the 56th Session, who presented the draft. The representatives of Australia,

Belarus, the People’s Republic of China, Cyprus, Cuba, Greece, Israel, Malta, Monaco and Zambia took the floor to support the draft resolution, which was adopted unanimously. The resolution (the full text of which is on page 51) fully expresses the spirit of the Olympic Truce. First and foremost, it is a question of observing the Olympic Truce along with all that it entails. For those journalists who have not quite understood the meaning, the IOC has obtained only “the *safe passage and participation of athletes and others at the Games*”, and not a truce. Well, the ‘ekecheiria’, or the Olympic Truce of Antiquity, was proclaimed precisely to enable the safe passage of athletes and pilgrims to Olympia so that they could take part in or watch the Olympic Games. There is therefore nothing out of the ordinary about this description. The resolution also requests the United Nations Secretary General to “*promote the observance of the Olympic Truce among the Member States, drawing the attention of world public opinion to the contribution such a truce would make to the promotion of international understanding, peace and goodwill, and to cooperate with the International Olympic Committee in the realisation of this objective*”. Moreover, the General Assembly decided “*to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-eighth session the item entitled ‘Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal’ and to consider this item before the Games of the XXVIII Olympiad which will be held in Athens (Greece) in 2004*”.

Once again, the IOC has achieved its goal and managed to convince the political world, by way of a highly symbolic act of diplomacy, to place an emphasis on the “peace” of which we are all in need.

And for me, this was the last time that I paced the corridors of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on behalf of the IOC and replied “*Mission accomplished*”.

Olympic Truce

Resolution

A/56/L.47

Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal

The General Assembly:

Recalling its decision to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-sixth session the item entitled 'Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal' and to consider this item every two years in advance of each Summer and Winter Olympic Games,

Recalling also its resolution 48/11 of 25 October 1993, which, inter alia, revived the ancient Greek tradition of ekecheiria or 'Olympic Truce', with the intent of ensuring the safe passage and participation of athletes and others at the Games,

Taking into account the inclusion in the United Nations Millennium Declaration of an appeal for the observance of the Olympic Truce now and in the future, and to support the International Olympic Committee in its efforts to promote peace and human understanding through sport and the Olympic ideal,

Recognizing that the goal of the Olympic Movement is to build a peaceful and better world by educating the youth of the world through sport, practised without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding, promoted by friendship, solidarity and fair play,

Recognizing also the valuable contribution that the appeal launched by the International Olympic Committee for an Olympic Truce, with which the National Olympic Committees of the Member

States are associated, could make towards advancing the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations,

Noting with satisfaction the flying of the United Nations flag at all competition sites of the Olympic Games, and the joint endeavours of the International Olympic Committee and the United Nations system in fields such as development, humanitarian assistance, health promotion, education, women, eradication of poverty, the fight against human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), drug abuse and juvenile delinquency,

Noting also with satisfaction the organization by the International Olympic Committee, with the cooperation of the United Nations Secretary-General, of round tables on sport for a culture of peace on different continents for countries that have been or are still in a conflict situation, in the framework of the International Year for the Culture of Peace and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 52/13 of 20 November 1997,

Welcoming the setting up by the International Olympic Committee, with the adherence of Member States and intergovernmental organizations, of a World Anti-Doping Agency,

1. **Requests** Member States to observe, within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations, the Olympic Truce during the XIX Olympic Winter Games to be held in Salt Lake City, United States of America, from 8 to 24 February 2002, by ensuring the safe passage and participation of athletes at the Games;

2. **Welcomes** the decision of the International Olympic Committee to mobilize all international sports organizations and that of the National Olympic Committees of the Member States to undertake concrete action at the local, national, regional and world levels to promote and strengthen a culture of peace based on the spirit of the Olympic Truce;

3. **Requests** the Secretary-General to promote the observance of the Olympic Truce among Member States, drawing the attention of world public opinion to the contribution such a truce would make to the promotion of international understanding, peace and goodwill, and to cooperate with the International Olympic Committee in the realization of this objective;

4. **Welcomes** the participation of the President in office of the General Assembly and also the representatives of the Secretary General and the Director-General of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in the International Olympic Truce Foundation;

5. **Urges** the International Olympic Committee to devise a special programme of assistance for the development of physical education and sport for countries affected by conflicts and poverty;

6. **Decides** to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-eighth session the item entitled 'Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal' and to consider this item before the Games of the XXVIII Olympiad, to be held in Athens, Greece, in 2004.