



INTERNATIONAL
OLYMPIC
COMMITTEE

On precisely this spot, thousands of years ago, the Greek people peacefully celebrated their unity in spite of their sometimes hostile diversity.

Pierre de Coubertin, whose heart is resting here in Ancient Olympia, rediscovered this unique gift of the Greek people to human culture after more than 1,500 years. He took the idea of the Olympic Games, breathed new life into it, developed it and, together with Greece, presented it to the entire world in 1896.

This is why especially here, in Ancient Olympia, we feel the breath of cultural history. But we also feel our responsibility for the future of everything the Olympic Games represent in terms of their culture and values.

Today, our Russian partners and friends in particular have a vital part to play in this responsibility. For this reason, I am very happy to greet the Doyen of the IOC, Vitaly Smirnov, the president of the Russian National Olympic Committee and IOC colleague, Alexander Zhukov, together with IOC member Shamil Tarpischev, the Mayor of Sochi, Anatoly Pakhomov, and the CEO of the Organising Committee for the XXII Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, Dmitry Chernyshenko. I am certain that they will offer us and the world excellent Games, to which we can all eagerly look forward.

The flame lit today by the Greek sun takes on this responsibility for a peaceful celebration here and now; the torches will carry it into the Olympic future. Thus the Olympic Torch Relay will be a messenger for the Olympic values of excellence, friendship and respect without any form of discrimination. In the coming months, this message will reach and inspire people from all walks of life.

The goal and culmination of this journey will be the Olympic Stadium in Sochi on 7 February 2014. There, the Olympic flame will remind all the athletes, participants and spectators of our Olympic values.

Just as in Ancient Greece, the Olympic Games cannot directly settle political problems or secure lasting peace between peoples. The Olympic flame thus reminds us to be aware of our own Olympic limits; but it reminds us also to use the strength of our values and symbols for the positive development of global human society.

The Olympic Games, the Olympic athletes and above all the Olympic Village can be a powerful symbol; they can set an example for peaceful coexistence and mutual respect.

They should inspire the people of the world, and especially the political authorities, by showing them that quarrels and conflicts can be addressed with peaceful means, that we can transcend all boundaries to agree on global rules for human competition and conflict resolution.

Understood in this way, the Olympic message sees the global diversity of cultures, societies and life choices as a source of enrichment. It accuses no-one and it excludes no-one. But it does require us all to defend and uphold the Olympic values in all the sports competitions; among all those taking part; and at all the Olympic venues.

Only then can we use our positive message of tolerance and respect through fair play in sport to set an example for the harmonious development of humanity. In this sense, the

Olympic flame should be an inspiration for billions of people across the globe. It should transmit the sporting joy of living and encourage people to engage in sports activity.

And now, as our Russian friends say: Poyékhali! Let's go! Bolshóye spasíba. Efkhariató poli. Thank you very much. Merci à vous tous.