



INTERNATIONAL  
OLYMPIC  
COMMITTEE

Thomas Bach  
President

## Lighting of the Olympic Flame Ceremony

**Olympia, 21 April 2016**

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We are gathering today on the hallowed grounds of Olympia, where three thousand years ago, the Ancient Greek civilization first celebrated the tradition of the Olympic Games. It was on this exact spot, that the first Olympic Games were held and the unique gift of the Greeks to humankind was born.

The Olympic Games brought the different Greek city states together for peaceful competition every four years. As the world prepares to gather in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to celebrate the Games of the XXXI Olympiad, we are reminded of the power of sport to bring people together in peace. Today we are paying tribute to this heritage. Then as now, the Olympic Games are a message of hope and peace.

Today is one of the rare moments when the past and the future of humanity connects. As our founder Pierre de Coubertin said, and I quote: "The Olympic Games are a pilgrimage to the past and an act of faith in the future." (End quotation)

We are marking the beginning of the celebration of the Games of the XXXI Olympiad in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. From this moment on the Olympic flame will spread the Olympic Values of tolerance, solidarity and peace to all Brazilians and indeed to all the people of the world.

The Olympic Values are eternal values – they were as relevant in ancient times as they are today. Like no other human activity, sport is about bringing people together in the spirit of friendship and respect. Sport always builds bridges, it never erects walls. In a world shaken



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by crises, the message that our shared humanity is greater than the forces that divide us, is more relevant than ever before.

This is why, together with our friends from Brazil, we are writing history today. For the first time, the Olympic Games will be held in South America. This milestone proves their universality. The Olympic Games are a great gift shared by all of humanity. Rio de Janeiro with the support of all Brazilians will provide a spectacular stage to showcase the best of the human spirit. In just a few weeks, the Brazilian people will enthusiastically welcome the world and amaze us with their joy of life and their passion for sport. This will be Brazil's moment and this will be Brazil's Games.

Today marks the start of the flame's journey to Brazil. This Olympic Games will be a message of hope in troubled times – and the flame will carry this message into all corners of Brazil and, indeed, all the world. In these difficult days that Brazil is facing, the flame is a timeless reminder that we all are part of the same humanity. The flame is an ancient symbol of peace and harmony, a symbol of the power of humanity to come together despite our differences. This will be the greatest legacy of the Olympic Games for Brazil and for the world. The torch relay will spread the message of our shared humanity to all people of the beautiful country of Brazil, a nation that is built on the idea that its strength comes from uniting all of its cultural richness. Brazil is unique in its diversity. Let the celebration of the Games of the XXXI Olympiad in this vast and wonderful country show the world the true meaning of unity in diversity.



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United in our diversity, we are greater than the sum of our parts. May today's lighting of the Olympic flame be another reminder to everyone to uphold the spirit of the Olympic Games and to build a better world through sport. Just as the pure rays of the sun light the Olympic flame today, it is my hope that the Olympic Games will inspire the nations of the world with the spirit of tolerance, solidarity and peace. By coming together in unity to celebrate the rich diversity of our shared humanity, the Olympic Games give us all hope that a better world is possible. Together, we can change the world.

Je vous invite à vous joindre à moi pour remercier nos hôtes, le président de la République hellénique, Prokopis Pavlopoulos, et le maire d'Olympie, Efthimios Kotzas, de nous avoir accueillis en ce lieu historique qui revêt une grande signification pour le Mouvement olympique et le monde. Permettez-moi d'exprimer également ma gratitude à Spyros Capralos, le président du Comité Olympique Hellénique, pour maintenir ces nobles traditions dans le berceau des Jeux Olympiques.

Félicitations à Eduardo Paes, le maire de Rio de Janeiro, et à mon ami et collègue Carlos Nuzman, le président du comité d'organisation. Rio de Janeiro est prête à accueillir le monde et c'est grâce à votre extraordinaire dévouement et engagement.

Sas epharisto poli, fili moy ellines.

Muito obrigado aos nossos amigos cariocas e a todos os brasileiros.

Thank you.