

Opening Ceremony of the 123rd IOC Session

Speech of the IOC President, Jacques Rogge
Durban, South Africa, 5 July 2011

President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr Jacob Zuma,
Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to start by thanking the authorities and the people of Durban for welcoming us to this wonderfully vibrant, culturally diverse city.

I also want to express my appreciation to the South African Sports Federation and Olympic Committee and its President, Mr Gideon Sam, and to its CEO, Mr Tubby Reddy, for their hard work to ensure the success of the 123rd Session of the International Olympic Committee and our Executive Board meeting.

And, of course, I cannot fail to recognise our dear colleague, Mr Sam Ramsamy — a proud son of Durban.

South Africa has demonstrated the power of sport in many ways, so it is altogether fitting that the new South Africa has earned an influential role in the Olympic Movement in a very short period of time.

Your Olympians have competed with honour and distinction, and you have contributed to our Movement in other important ways. The 2010 FIFA World Cup was a global showcase for the new South Africa and a significant milestone for the entire continent.

The International Olympic Committee has come to Durban this week for some important decisions. Tomorrow, my colleagues will select the host city for the 2018 Olympic Winter Games. They have approached their task with the diligence and professionalism required by a decision of such magnitude.

After a thorough review of all technical aspects of the bids, including on-site visits, the IOC Evaluation Commission, led by our colleague, Gunilla Lindberg, has concluded that all three candidates — Munich, Annecy and PyeongChang — could successfully host the Games.

I cannot predict the outcome of the vote, but I can say with confidence that the city selected to host the 2018 Olympic Winter Games will have the capacity to deliver outstanding results.

We can look forward to the 2012 London Games with even greater confidence. The Games of the XXX Olympiad are now just under 13 months away, and all preparations are on track.

We are six months away from the first Winter Youth Olympic Games in Innsbruck. I have every reason to believe that they will replicate the success of the first Youth Olympic Games in Singapore last summer.

We have much to look forward to, and we can look to the future with confidence because the Olympic Movement is strong. But confidence should not be cause for complacency.

Protecting the integrity of sport is a priority for the IOC. We are continuing our efforts in the fight against doping and are ensuring a level playing field for the athletes who compete in the true Olympic spirit. Impartial judging and refereeing remain a cornerstone for fair competition. And we must protect sport from the increased risks caused by illegal and irregular betting. The IOC is convinced that, in all these areas, cooperation with governments is essential to ensure that our athletes can compete in fair and upright sports events.

Tonight, on the eve of the 123rd Session of the International Olympic Committee, let us renew our commitment to the values that led to the founding of our Movement well over a century ago. Our Movement is strong because we have held true to those values.

Our Movement exists to place sport at the service of humanity. That is what brings us to Durban. So let us enjoy this pleasant evening. And tomorrow, we will go to work for the good of our Movement; for the athletes we seek to serve; and for the greater good of society.

Thank you very much.