

Opening Ceremony of the 125th IOC Session

IOC President, Jacques Rogge

Buenos Aires, Argentina, 6 September 2013

Representatives of the Authorities,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would typically begin my remarks with words of thanks, but tonight, I would like to start by offering my congratulations to Buenos Aires, for winning the right to host the 2018 Youth Olympic Games.

You made a compelling case that demonstrated your commitment to the Youth Olympic Games and its unique blend of sport, education and cultural activities.

I know that you will fully justify the trust and confidence that has been placed in you.

I also want to express my gratitude to Gerardo Werthein and his entire team at the Argentine National Olympic Committee for their hard work to prepare for this 125th IOC Session and our Executive Board meeting.

Hosting the 2018 Youth Olympic Games will add another achievement to Argentina's proud Olympic heritage. Our thanks go also to the City of Buenos Aires and its dynamic Mayor, Mauricio Macri.

The Argentine National Olympic Committee is celebrating its 90th anniversary this year, but Argentina's role in the Olympic Movement goes further back, to the creation of the International Olympic Committee in 1894.

The 13 original IOC members included a remarkable man named José Benjamin Zubiaur, an Argentine educator who played a central role in laying the foundation for his homeland's success as a sporting powerhouse.

Argentina has produced a long list of sporting heroes and many great Olympians in football, tennis, boxing and other sports.

That long commitment to the Olympic Movement makes Buenos Aires a fitting place for discussions and decisions that will help chart the future of the Olympic Movement.

We are now just five months away from the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi.

The Executive Board has received good reports on the final preparations in Russia, as well as the work that is underway for the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro and the 2018 Games in PyeongChang.

The preparations for the 2nd Summer YOG in Nanjing and the 2nd Winter YOG in Lillehammer are excellent.

Now it is time to look further into the future.

Tomorrow, this Session will select a host for the 2020 Games from three strong candidates — Istanbul, Madrid and Tokyo.

I want to thank my colleague, Craig Reedie, and the other members of the IOC Evaluation Committee for their diligent oversight of this process.

This Session will also make important decisions on the Olympic Programme.

Finding the right balance of sports and keeping the programme fresh are essential for the continued relevancy and success of the Olympic Games.

And this Session will elect the next IOC president.

We are very fortunate to have six capable, qualified candidates, any one of whom could ably lead this great organisation.

I cannot predict who the next IOC president will be. But I am certain of this: whoever it is will have the experience of a lifetime.

It has been my great honour to lead this organisation for the past 12 years.

When you love sport like I do, it is an indescribable privilege to play a role in fulfilling the dreams of athletes and putting sport to work for society.

My belief in the ideals of our Movement and the positive power of sport are stronger than ever.

When I was first elected in 2001, my first words were to thank my colleagues for their confidence in me.

As I near the end of my tenure, I want to thank them again — not just for their confidence, but also for their support and guidance over these privileged and sometimes challenging years.

The Olympic Movement is much bigger than any one person.

Its success derives from timeless values and the power of sport.

Its future rests with the next president, all of you, and everyone who believes in the values that we cherish.

I am confident that the Olympic Movement is strong and that its future is bright.

I wish you all a wonderful evening. And tomorrow, let's get back to work.

Thank you.