



OLYMPIC VALUES

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I have been asked to speak today about Olympic Values.

This subject, as you well know, is complex, and any attempt not to render it too incomplete, will require more time than I have been allotted. In fact, the Olympic Games have not only traversed but also marked centuries of ancient history, since the calendar was determined on the basis of the Games at Olympia and calculated in relation to its values, which are the selfsame foundations of our civilisation. We can track 100 years of history from the first Games in Athens – that was revisited and given new life by Baron De Coubertin – through to the splendid and immeasurable Beijing 2008 Olympic Games.

It is necessary to educate youth to respect the rules and others. And we all know how in everyday life these needs are so fundamental for progress, coexistence, the civilisation of mankind. We must address these needs, which are not just philosophy: they are life.

We know all too well that these two values alone – respect for the rules and for others – will help bring up better citizens, which will benefit their countries and humanity as a whole, more so in places which are unfortunately still too many – where rules and regulations exist on paper alone and where tolerance for others has no home.

But it is not these values I wish to speak about. I have chosen one and one alone value – the one society is most concerned with: sport and peace.

However, I would rather say that sport is peace.

We have learned from the most ancient history books that peace imposed itself even in the Greece of the *polis*, where fighting was an everyday matter. Only once, since 774 BC, was the Sacred Truce violated.

We have seen in the recent past and present, how sport and peace come together in the field of play, flank each other on the starting blocks, and climb together onto the winners' podium.

Who can forget those two mothers, one Russian and one Georgian, who embraced each other on the Olympic podium in Beijing the day after a bloody conflict had broken out between their two countries? They were two mothers, two women, two athletes who shared the same sentiment: live in peace. Live in sport. To bring up one's children as they should be throughout the world: meeting each other, knowing one another better. Because one of the secrets of peace and sport is to know one another - it is dialogue.

As long as our young people are able to have contact with each other and speak to each other, it will be possible to overcome ethnic, religious and political differences.

Sport does not erect walls, it builds bridges.

The Olympic Games can, in truth, no longer stop wars; those many, forgotten wars that kill in many parts of the world, particularly in those places where the people are already exterminated by poverty, famine and disease. We speak about these people, often. But what kind of miracle do we witness when people who fight one another meet in sport? And the Olympic Games in particular?

This miracle happens when the flags of all the world's countries come together in that authentic World Parade. The ceremony that opens our extraordinary event proves this miracle and shows it to the numerous spectators who follow the Games through the most modern media channels. And it is exactly on these occasions, even if we can no longer stop wars, that we can launch our message of peace: togetherness.

Here is the word that encapsulates many of the values of sport. We speak and write a lot about this Global Village, of this world that is for everyone, or that should be for everyone.

Sport is for everyone. Togetherness is the most important Olympic value. Because to be together means to demolish all barriers; when there are no occasions in which to meet and talk, this is when incomprehension arises and the endless clashes begin. Instead, you can all testify that sport is the territory of culture, dialogue and friendship. Sport unites, teaches us how to tolerate differences, respect for the rules and for one's adversary.

Those who practise sports know this and show this every time with their deeds. The athlete who wears another shirt is only an adversary, never an enemy. They are adversaries, but not enemies.

During the Olympic Games we see our young people train together, compete, and live together for many days in the Olympic Village. It is in this way that we too can build a better future for our young people by getting them used to life in common.

We see them give everything they have got during the competitions. They then come together outside the white lines of the racetrack, the floats in the pool, the throwing circle, past the net that in some sports splits the court in two. They are never divided by anything.

They are together.

This is the Olympic value, the importance of which I want to underline.

Togetherness



Like those mothers in Beijing, the Israeli and the Palestinians, the Koreans who paraded under the same flag, the Africans and the Europeans, the Americans and Asians, the people of Oceania. Like Christians and Muslims, Jews and Buddhists. Like the rich and poor. Like the winner and the vanquished. Like a man and woman.

Like sport and peace: togetherness. We believe in this. The world of sport believes in this and every day works to achieve this goal so as to ensure a future of peace for future generations.

Perhaps it is just a dream, but it is also dreams that nourish humanity if it wants to hope for a better world. And what better dream can there be than that of sport?