



OLYMPIC VALUES

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Why do we have the Olympic Games? Is it superfluous to ask this question when the Olympic Games now celebrates its 113th anniversary and has now become the largest cultural and sport gala of the world? Well, it is exactly because the Olympic Games have such enormous social influence that commercial involvement and political interference have not ceased. It is necessary to raise this question from time to time and to discuss it among ourselves to get a deeper understanding of the *raison d'être* of the Olympic Games. In this way we can make sure that the Olympic Movement will always sail on the right course in the face of commercial involvement and political interference.

We all know that the very aim of Baron Pierre de Coubertin in reinitiating the Olympic Games was to educate young people, inspire society and promote peace. Sport and the Games are vehicles for reaching this objective. How do we prevent any deviation from this objective?

It is true that commercialisation of the Olympic Games does bring crucial financial support for the Olympic Movement allowing it to enjoy rapid and sustained development. No doubt, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) should maintain and magnify the financial benefits of its marketing endeavours. However, it should stand alert as well as take measures to stay away from intentional or unintentional attempts to place commercial interests above the interest of sport. It must also guard against any diversion from the pursuit of the Olympic values.

More importantly, we must firmly place the promotion of Olympic values at the top of our priorities.

The Olympic spirit and ideals initiated by Baron Pierre de Coubertin have been enriched continuously by his successors to form the Olympism of today.

In my view, Olympism could be understood in terms of the following three notions:

1. to place sport, by blending it with culture and education, at the service of the harmonious and balanced development of a person's body, will and mind;
2. to promote on this basis, a society concerned with the respect of human dignity; and
3. to create, thereafter, a peaceful and better world.

When exploring the reasons for the extraordinary development of the Olympic Games, it is certainly true that sport has its inborn charms and is spectacular. However, the values and ideals that the Olympic Games call for are the fundamental reasons for which the Olympic Movement can grow ever prosperous associate itself closely with society and plant its roots deeply in social life.

In recent years, the IOC has summarised these Olympic values as "Friendship, Excellence and Respect". Actually, these three concepts can be more easily remembered by the general public. There is no need to further exemplify "Friendship" and "Excellence" the meaning of which is very explicit. Here, I would like to share with you some of my views on the concept of "Respect". Respect means obeying rules, being disciplined and ethical as well as showing respect to your rivals and spectators in competitions. But it also means showing respect to everyone's and every country's equal right to social activities, both domestically and internationally.

Nations develop in their specific social and historical conditions, nurturing diverse cultures, religions, ideologies and different social systems. This is a fact which can not be altered by one's will and makes our world more rich and colourful. The Olympic Games belong to the whole world and not just to a certain type of country. To be truly universal our Olympic Movement must: persevere in respecting this diversity and difference: oppose any form of discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, politics, or gender, as stipulated in the Olympic Charter; and refuse any interference based on discriminatory thinking.

Ignorance or a lack of reciprocal knowledge inevitably leads to misunderstanding, prejudice and even hatred. On the other hand, dialogue and exchange can improve mutual acknowledgement and understanding, hence boosting mutual respect and fostering friendship.

The Olympic Games provide such a unique opportunity for dialogue and exchange among all people around the world, in particular, young people who constitute the future of mankind.

Through the Olympic values, the Olympic Games give this world, full of confrontation and conflict, an example of hope and inspiration. It carries a message that, individuals, communities and countries, are not doomed to jostle or kill each other. Instead, they can compete and develop mutual respect and friendship.

Our noble cause is therefore to carry forward the Olympic values and make the Olympic Games a bridge of tolerance, understanding, respect and friendship among countries, races, religions and ideologies, in order to make a better and more harmonious world.