MOVING TOWARDS AN ACTIVE SOCIETY

BRUNO **GRANDI**

IF representative • **FIG – International Gymnastics Federation**

ORIGINAL TEXT IN ITALIAN

It is imperative for Olympism to move from the stage of messages and declarations to that of concrete actions. This process is, in fact, taking shape through the Youth Olympic Games (YOG). Declarations about the ethical values of sport and the role of fair play are too often compromised by the serious incidents that occur during competitions. These dismal acts end up becoming the enemies of sport. Our hollow rhetoric consequently provokes negative reactions among young people.

The new generations need to hear the voice of the major sports events and, primarily, that of the Olympic Games. That said, they also want to play an active part in these global events and, to do so, they must know the true and profound history of the Olympic Games, their meaning in human and moral terms, and how far they have contributed to the progress of civilisation.

If we continue to convey messages without vigour, if we do not succeed in giving substance to the social and cultural values of the Games, all our communications efforts will be in vain and remain ineffective.

We need to provide powerful stimuli, which result in concrete involvement, to give convincing reasons which will push people into practising a sporting activity as a philosophy or practical life-choice, and to raise awareness in the community of the problems of the environment in which we live. In the absence of more consistent behaviour, young people will still not be challenged to think more deeply and in more concrete terms about sport as a phenomenon and, above all, about the place of the Olympic Ideal in building a more mature and aware civilisation.

Beyond the purely technical and entertainment aspects that we attribute to and recognise in sport, it is these absolute values that give us the opportunity to share an extraordinary experience with young people – values that justify all our efforts to win victory, or at least to take part in competition, the Olympic Games, and now the YOG. The value of sport lies not only in winning, but in experiencing these anthropological values, rich in ethical teachings, which make participation in sport an act of civilisation.

Young people must grasp the historical meaning of the Olympiads. They must know that their first celebration marked the end of humankind's "primitive" stage and the dawn of civilisation. This was a key historical moment, as the simple anthropological meeting of individuals was transformed into a civilised confrontation, because it was governed by rules, the very first of which was respect for one's opponent. In addition, we must continue to remind people of the deep meaning of the Olympic Truce, which accompanies the Olympic Games and illustrates their message of peace among peoples.

The YOG, responding to an urgent need to promote a healthy lifestyle, mark a new stage in Olympism. They reinforce the conviction that sport offers:

- psycho-physical well-being, if it is practised within the limits of each person's physical capabilities;
- moral well-being, insofar as it enhances the value of life, developed through respect for the rules governing sport, which pits competitors against one another in the quest for an ideal; and
- social well-being, achieved through the spirit of solidarity and willingness to collaborate which lives in us all.

The objective of the YOG is to exalt these values, so that young people can enjoy this experience not in its traditional nationalist spirit, which is too often exacerbated during sporting events, but rather in a spirit of fraternity, friendship and benevolent competition.

Personally, I lay great stress on the fact that young people must realise that Olympism is a philosophy of life, a path that never comes to an end, an existential philosophy that aspires to its full realisation, as well as to securing the support of our contemporaries, and has not yet been wholly assimilated in its universal finality by public and private institutions.