



International
Olympic
Committee

The President

**Lighting of the Olympic Flame Ceremony
for the Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022
Olympia, 18 October 2021**

3,000 years ago, it was right here in Olympia, on this sacred ground, that the ancient Greeks started to celebrate the Olympic Games.

We are grateful to the Greek people to this very day for this precious gift to all humankind. This is why I would like to thank the President of the Hellenic Republic, Her Excellency Katerina Sakellariopoulou, for honouring us with her presence today, demonstrating the direct connection between modern Greece and this noble heritage.

My thanks and gratitude also go to our hosts, the Hellenic Olympic Committee, under the great leadership of its President, Spyros Capralos and the Mayor of Olympia, Georgios Georgiopoulos.

The Olympic Games are universal. They stand above all the differences that divide us. The Olympic Games unite humanity in all our diversity. In our fragile world, where division, conflict and mistrust are on the rise, the Olympic Games always build bridges. They never erect walls.

The foundation for the ancient Olympic Games to take place in peace was a sacred truce – the ekecheiria. This Olympic Truce ensured a halt to hostilities, allowing athletes and spectators to travel safely to Olympia and home again. The ekecheiria demonstrates that already the ancient Greeks understood that for the Olympic Games to take place, to unfold their unifying power, they must stand above any political conflict. In this way, already 3,000 years ago, there was an inseparable link between the Olympic Games and peace.

This peace mission, handed down to us since ancient times, requires that the Olympic Games be respected as politically neutral ground. Only this political neutrality ensures that the Olympic Games can stand above and beyond the political differences that existed in ancient times as well as today.

Also the founder of the International Olympic Committee, Pierre de Coubertin, saw the Olympic Games as a unique way to promote peace among nations and all people in our modern era.

In this modern world that is drifting apart, the Olympic Games are the only event that brings the entire world together in peaceful competition.

As the global coronavirus pandemic has made abundantly clear, we can only achieve this and we can only address the many challenges in this world in solidarity. We need more solidarity. We need more solidarity within societies. We need more solidarity among societies.

There is no peace without solidarity.

In these difficult times we are all still living through, the Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022 will be an important moment to bring the world together in this spirit of peace, friendship and solidarity. The best winter sport athletes of the world will compete with each other for Olympic glory, while living peacefully together under one roof in the Olympic Village.

In the Olympic Games, everyone respects the same rules. In the Olympic Games, we are all equal, irrespective of social background, gender, race, sexual orientation, or political belief.

In this way, the athletes will show us that we can only go faster, we can only aim higher, we can only become stronger, if we stand together – in solidarity.

Beijing will write history as the first city ever to host both the summer and winter editions of the Olympic Games. The Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022 will connect the Chinese people with the world, bringing to life China's vision to engage 300 million

people with sport on snow and ice, changing winter sport forever. The entire world will see this passion when China welcomes the best winter sport athletes.

Already now, I would like to thank the Beijing 2022 Organising Committee for the excellent preparation for these Games. We can be sure that our Chinese partners and friends will deliver outstanding Olympic Winter Games.

The Olympic Games cannot address all the challenges in our world. But the Olympic Games set an example for a world where everyone respects the same rules and one another. They inspire us to solve problems in friendship and solidarity. They build bridges leading to better understanding and friendship among people.

This is the timeless message that this Olympic flame will send from our spiritual home here in ancient Olympia, to Beijing, and to the world.

(In Chinese: Together for a shared future. See you in Beijing.)