



International  
Olympic  
Committee

The President

## Opening Ceremony of the 142nd IOC Session

Paris, 22 July 2024

---

Bienvenue à la 142e Session du CIO. Bienvenue à Paris, la ville si chère à notre Mouvement olympique. Tout a commencé ici à Paris, ville natale de notre fondateur Pierre de Coubertin, à qui nous devons tout.

Il y a 130 ans, dans sa ville natale, Coubertin a rétabli les Jeux Olympiques et créé le CIO. Je suis convaincu qu'en ce moment, il nous regarde de son Olympe. Arborant un large sourire depuis sa place dans les cieux olympiques, il doit être extrêmement fier du retour des Jeux Olympiques dans sa chère ville natale, un siècle après avoir présidé les derniers Jeux Olympiques à Paris.

Comme nous tous, je suis sûr qu'il a hâte de voir la flamme olympique faire briller encore plus la Ville lumière. Comme des milliards de personnes dans le monde, nous attendons avec impatience des Jeux Olympiques plus jeunes, plus inclusifs, plus urbains et plus durables. Les premiers Jeux Olympiques avec une parité totale femmes-hommes. Les premiers Jeux Olympiques inspirés du début à la fin des réformes de notre Agenda olympique.

C'est donc avec enthousiasme que nous exprimons tous nos sincères remerciements à nos aimables hôtes français, qui font briller la magie des Jeux Olympiques comme jamais auparavant.

Ces remerciements vont en premier lieu, au président de la République, Monsieur Emmanuel Macron, auquel j'adresse nos plus chaleureux mots de bienvenue, ainsi qu'à son épouse, Madame Brigitte Macron. Cher ami Emmanuel : un grand merci pour votre engagement personnel, qui joue depuis toujours un rôle déterminant pour le succès des Jeux Olympiques Paris 2024.

Toute notre gratitude va aussi au Comité d'organisation Paris 2024, sous l'excellent leadership de mon collègue olympien, Tony Estanguet. En ouvrant grand ces Jeux, ensemble avec ses collègues, il donne vie aux réformes de notre Agenda Olympique.

Je tiens également à exprimer toute notre gratitude à mon ami Bernard Arnault qui, avec son épouse Hélène, nous accueille dans ce magnifique cadre.

Quelle émotion quand j'ai appris que cet emblématique édifice où nous sommes ce soir, se trouvait sur le jardin choisi par Coubertin pour le dîner de clôture du Congrès fondateur du CIO il y a 130 ans. Un simple hasard? On peut dire plutôt : la boucle est bouclée.

Nous savons tous que pour la réussite des Jeux Olympiques, il faut une forte équipe à domicile. C'est pourquoi nos remerciements, mais aussi et surtout nos meilleurs vœux, vont au président du CNOSF, notre cher ami et collègue, David Lappartient, et à l'équipe olympique française : Allez les Bleus!

C'est une source d'inspiration de voir l'unité de la France pour les Jeux Olympiques Paris 2024. Avec tous les acteurs du monde sportif, politique, culturel et social, vous avez tous ensemble pleinement réussi à faire briller l'esprit olympique à Paris et dans toute la France. Dans ce contexte, nous remercions la ville de Paris, la région d'Île-de-France, et la Métropole du Grand Paris. Chère Anne Hidalgo, chère Valérie Pécresse, cher Patrick Ollier: soyez les bienvenus dans la communauté olympique à laquelle vous appartenez.

Fort de cette unité, nous sommes convaincus qu'on va vivre tous ensemble, et avec le monde entier, des Jeux Olympiques spectaculaires. Et qui sait, cette unité et ce grand élan pourraient être un facteur important dans l'élection de l'hôte pour les Jeux Olympiques et Paralympiques d'hiver 2030, qui se déroulera lors de cette session du CIO.

While we are all fully focused on the success of the Olympic Games Paris 2024, I also, as always, want to take a look to the wider future of our beloved Olympic Movement.

We are witnessing a new world order in the making. Historic disruptions are upending the system of international relations that has been in place since the second World War. The trends are unfortunately clear: decoupling of economies; beggar-thy-neighbour; narrow self-interests trumping the rule of law; “Global South” vs “Global North”. Everywhere you look, multilateralism is on the backfoot. In this new world order, “cooperation” and “compromise” are sadly considered disparaging terms.

These trends are deeply disturbing to us because they are going straight against our mission to unite. Grounded in and united by our Olympic values – we must be ready to face this sea-change. We are prepared because we are not only multilateral – we are global. The Olympic Movement is a global movement. In the Olympic Movement, we are all equal. There is no “Global South” or “Global North”. We have 206 National Olympic Committees that all enjoy equal rights under the Olympic Charter.

What is more, we are living in solidarity with each other. Solidarity – this core value defines our Olympic community. We help, we care, we share – with athletes, with National Olympic Committees, with International Federations and sports organisations around the world. We are doing so by giving back 90 per cent of all our revenues to the Olympic community. Every day of the year, 4.2 million US dollars go to support athletes and the just and equal development of sport. We do not support just a handful of privileged few. Every single one of the 206 National Olympic Committees around the globe and every single International Federation is benefiting from our Olympic Solidarity. They in turn are making an essential contribution to the success of the Olympic Games, and we thank in this respect in particular the International Federations, for all their invaluable contribution to the organisation of the competitions. This is solidarity in action.

Solidarity fuels our mission to make the world a better place through sport. This solidarity is made possible through the generous support of all our TOP Partners and Media Rights Holders. Their steadfast commitment to our Olympic values has allowed us to weather the consequences of the pandemic, the consequences of the geopolitical tensions and the consequences of the global economic slow-down. Today, I am very happy to be able to inform you that the IOC continues to enjoy a very robust financial situation.

Thanks to the financial support from our commercial partners we have already today secured 7.3 billion US dollars of revenue for the next Olympiad from 2025 to 2028. Even for the Olympiad 2029 to 2032, we have already secured 6.2 billion dollars. With a full pipeline, these figures will only increase. In fact, our situation is so robust that it allows us to increase our Olympic Solidarity budget by 10 per cent to 650 million US dollars for the coming Olympiad. The support for the least privileged NOCs through the TOP Programme can even increase by 43 per cent. This is just another demonstration of how we walk our talk when it comes to solidarity: For us, money is not an end in itself. For us, money is just a tool for solidarity.

But this money does not just magically fall from heaven. This is why I want to express all our gratitude to all our TOP Partners and Media Rights Holders for their outstanding and always loyal support in our turbulent times.

This stability is also reflected in the ever-growing relevance of the Olympic Games. At present, we have already allocated the Games of the Olympiad until 2028 to LA and until 2032 to Brisbane. What is more, we currently have a double-digit figure of countries and NOCs interested in hosting Olympic Games in 2036 and some even in 2040. I cannot remember a time when we have been in such a favourable situation, with such a significant number of interested parties to host Olympic Games 12 or even 16 years in advance. It may not come as a surprise to you, when I say that this is all thanks to our Olympic Agenda reforms.

Dear Olympic friends,

Solidarity and equality – these are also central elements when it comes to the discussion of the impact of Artificial Intelligence on sport. The rapid development of AI is turbo-charging change, affecting every aspect of our lives, including the world of sport. When you look at this pace of change, you realise just how vital it was that we launched our Olympic AI Agenda earlier this year. With our Olympic AI Agenda, we are breaking new ground, by providing a holistic approach of how the world of sport can embrace the potential of AI.

Our values are at the heart of this approach. This means: AI technology must be available for everybody in our Olympic community. Not just for a privileged few. Like sport itself, it must be available to all people. AI can give more people better access to sport. AI can spread the benefits of sport more widely and more equally.

At the centre of the Olympic AI Agenda is the human being. This means: the athlete. Because the athlete is *the* heart of the Olympic Movement. Unlike other sectors of society, we in sport are not confronted with the ultimate ethical question of whether AI will be a competitor of the human being – or even replace the human being. In sport, the performance will always have to be delivered by the athlete. The 100 metres will always have to be run by an athlete – a human being. Therefore, our focus is on this human being. Our focus is on human dignity.

We want to harness the benefits of AI for sport in a responsible way. Without exacerbating existing inequalities. Without accelerating the decoupling we see in other areas of society. To do this we have to seize the opportunities and manage the risks.

We are only at the start of this journey. Yes, we have some tangible projects underway. But there remain many variables and unknowns. This technology is changing so fast, that we need to ask ourselves every day whether the assumptions of today will still be valid

tomorrow. We need to remain vigilant, open, agile and make the necessary adaptations to stay ahead of the curve. If we succeed in this, then we can truly contribute to a more human-centred world with AI – at least in our modest world of sport.

We are also humble enough to know that we cannot go on this journey alone. This is why we are so grateful to all our trusted partners who are supporting us on this journey in an outstanding way.

Today, I extend my hand to all AI stakeholders, including commercial partners: join us. Join us on this exciting journey to bring together the innovative force of AI with the values-based world of sport. With such a partnership, we have the perfect demonstration of how humankind can benefit from AI – instead of being replaced by it.

At the same time, I reiterate our call on the governments to agree on worldwide applicable AI Governance Regulations that set the parameters for such a humanistic vision of AI. These global governance regulations need to encourage technological developments that ensure equitable progress within and among societies, and most importantly – that preserve human dignity.

The same values are also at the heart of our engagement in another important development in the digital world: the rise of esports and gaming.

Whatever our views are on esports and gaming, the numbers speak for themselves. Globally, there are well over 3 billion people familiar with gaming, a figure that continues to grow by the day. While in 2021, the global gaming live-streaming audience was just around 800 million people, this figure will grow to 1.5 billion spectators next year. These are all young people.

We cannot ignore these staggering numbers. They make it crystal clear: if we want to continue to be relevant in the lives of young people, if we want to continue to inspire the

next generation with our Olympic values – then we have to go to where the young people are, in the real world and in the digital world. We have to go to esports.

This is why at our IOC Session in Mumbai in October last year, I asked our IOC Esports Commission to study the creation of Olympic Esports Games. Thanks to the record-breaking speed of our Commission, led by our dear colleague David Lappartient, the Executive Board is now in the position to propose to you, my dear colleagues and friends, the creation of Olympic Esports Games.

I am pleased to inform you that the Commission has not only developed its proposal in record-time, it has also done an exceptional job at preparing a very comprehensive and concrete proposal. The proposal is to organise Olympic Esports Games that fully align with our core values that have guided us for 130 years. Also with respect to esports, our values are and remain the red line that we will never cross.

What is more, we are in a position to propose to you the creation of Olympic Esports Games with a partner and first host that is a recognised leader in this area: National Olympic Committee of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is a country with 23 million gamers and has become an established host of events and competitions of the esports community. As such, the Saudi NOC has a unique expertise in esports and in working with all the stakeholders of the esports market.

By partnering with the Saudi NOC we ensure that all our activities will happen in full compliance with the Olympic Charter. At the same time we want to support the enormous progress the Saudi NOC has made with regard to the popularisation of sport and in particular the participation of girls and women in sport.

The decision in front of us is a far-reaching one. A unique window of opportunity has opened for us – let us seize this opportunity.

These examples – AI and esports – illustrate in a powerful way that there is not only a new world order in the making when it comes to geopolitics. These forces of change show us that society at large is also being rewired in very fundamental ways. Digital communication is at the centre of the new social dynamic. For those of us from the analogue age – like me, for example – it is not always easy to keep up with the pace and depth of this change. This change manifests itself in very different ways. A new language is developing. Ask yourself: can you use FOMO, BAE, LOL or GOAT in a sentence that makes any sense to you? I cannot.

And I could go on with even less understandable expressions. But it does not stop with the language. This change manifests itself in new ways of speaking with each other; in very different habits and lifestyles; in a more individualistic interpretation of values; in more raucous and more aggressive self-expression. We may embrace this, or we may take issue with one or the other manifestation of this new social fabric. The fact remains, we have to address it.

Young people everywhere are living such digital lives. Our young Olympic fans are living digital lives. The 120 million followers who engage with us over 600 million times per month are living digital lives. The athletes are living digital lives. If we want to remain relevant in their digital lives, we must engage with this digitally native generation in their digital way of living.

We have already made great progress with this engagement. But we must continue and even accelerate to adapt. When we launched our Olympic Agenda 2020, our call to action was: “change or be changed”. This call to action is perhaps even more urgent today, when change in society is being turbo-charged. As we did with Olympic Agenda, we can and we must change before we are being changed. For this change, we need to change our mindset. We need the mindset of the digital natives.

Dear Olympic friends,



In these difficult times, there are so many divisive forces tearing humanity apart: the far too many wars and conflicts around the world, decoupling of the global economy, greed, hate, fake news, protectionism, the list goes on.

Whenever you speak with people – everybody is fed up. People are fed up with all this hate, aggression, the killing, war and confrontation. In their hearts – in all our hearts – we are longing for something which brings us together. We are longing for something that gives us hope. This is why billions of people are looking forward to the Olympic Games Paris 2024 as this symbol of hope, as this symbol of togetherness. They see the Olympic Games as the only event that still brings the entire world together in peaceful competition.

In this world of division, the athletes personify our shared hope for a better future. The athletes are showing us how to live peacefully together under one roof in the Olympic Village. The athletes are showing us that in our Olympic Movement, we are all equal. There is no discrimination. There is only one global village – the Olympic Village. From this Olympic Village – at this very moment as we speak – the athletes from the territories of all 206 National Olympic Committees and the IOC Refugee Olympic Team are sending a powerful message: we all belong to the one and only humankind, united in all our diversity.

This is our Olympic answer to all the forces that want to divide us: our values matter. In these dark times, our Olympic values matter more than ever. It is only by living our Olympic values – the values of solidarity, equality, human dignity for all – that we can manage to bring the entire world together in peace. The athletes this afternoon have made this very clear. When they assembled around the Olympic Truce Mural and were sending from there a call to all the political leaders of this world. United, all the athletes of countries in war were there. All the athletes of countries in conflict, they were all there. And they all were saying: Give Peace a chance.

We look forward to experience this togetherness when the first Olympic Games inspired by our Olympic Agenda from start to finish get underway in four days from now. In organising “Games Wide Open”, our friends of the Paris 2024 Organising Committee are creating inclusive Olympic Games in every respect. By bringing sport to where the people are, every spectator can become a participant. Iconic monuments will be transformed into competition venues, bringing sport into the heart of the city. The public can take part in sports events, such as the “Marathon Pour Tous”. Also beyond Paris, these Olympic Games are inspiring people all across France with sport. In schools and in communities across the country, reaching millions of people.

A very significant milestone for inclusion – the gender parity of these Olympic Games. As a result, we will celebrate for the first time this symbol of inclusivity: Olympic Games with full gender parity.

An emblematic symbol of our commitment to inclusion and solidarity is the IOC Refugee Olympic Team. A record number of refugee athletes will participate here in Paris. They are sending a powerful message to the 120 million of refugees and displaced people around the globe: you are our fellow human beings. You are an enrichment to our Olympic community.

The Olympic Games are first and foremost about sport. But they are about so much more than sport. They are about: Togetherness. Hope. Solidarity. Equality. Dignity. Peace – through the joy and passion of sport. So together with all our French partners and friends, together with the people from all over the world, let us celebrate this joy and passion that only Olympic sport can give us. Let us celebrate Olympic Games in this magnificent City of Light. Let us celebrate Olympic Games in this enchanting City of Love. Let us celebrate, united in all our diversity. Let us celebrate our Olympic motto: Faster, Higher, Stronger – Together.