



International
Olympic
Committee

The President

Sport and Hope Conference

The Vatican, 14 June 2025

Please allow me to express the deep gratitude of the entire Olympic Movement for the inclusion of a Jubilee of Sport in this Holy Year. We are profoundly humbled by what this represents. It is a powerful recognition that sport, like faith, can be a source of meaning, unity and, above all, of hope.

Hope is at the heart of the Olympic Games. The fundamental idea behind the Olympic Games is to unite the entire world in peaceful competition. Peace is at the very heart of this mission. At the Olympic Games, the athletes embody this peace mission when they set aside the differences that divide the world. This makes the Olympic Games a powerful symbol of peace and of hope.

We experienced this message of hope particularly with the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, which were the light at the end of the tunnel during the coronavirus pandemic.

We saw this vividly at the Olympic Games Paris 2024. Athletes from the territories of all 206 National Olympic Committees and the IOC Refugee Olympic Team competed fiercely against each other. At the same time, they lived peacefully together in the Olympic Village. Despite many of their countries being at war, the athletes respected one another. The athletes showed us how our world could be – if we all lived in the Olympic spirit of peaceful coexistence. They created a culture of peace.

This message of togetherness we also expressed when we announced the amendment to our Olympic motto, when we added to the “faster higher stronger” the word “together”. This message of joie de vivre – this message of peace and hope – this is what people all over the world were longing for. Deep in their hearts, they are all longing for a positive message of hope, of togetherness and peace. Deep in their hearts, they are fed

up with all this hatred with this war and aggression we have to suffer from every day in our lives.

These Olympic Games captured the hearts and minds of five billion people around the globe who followed them closely. Three-quarters of these people considered the Olympic Games to be more important than ever before in this divided world. And they say that the IOC was successful in uniting the entire world in a peaceful competition and in this way making the world a better place through sport.

The athletes embraced their role as ambassadors of peace. In Paris, they came together to issue a moving call for peace. This call included athletes from the NOCs of Ukraine, Russia, Israel, Palestine, Iran, Yemen and many others whose countries are currently divided by war and conflict. They reminded all of us that peace is not just an idealistic dream. Peace can be a lived reality when people come together in respect and solidarity. I was deeply moved when, during my last private audience this past January, His Holiness Pope Francis joined this call for peace.

Among the athletes in Paris were 37 athletes with no country to call their own: the IOC Refugee Olympic Team. This team has a special place in the Olympic Movement. We created this team for the first time for the Olympic Games Rio 2016, also inspired by the great engagement of Pope Francis for refugees. With this initiative, we wanted to make the world aware of the magnitude of the global refugee crisis. Having no national team to belong to, no flag to march behind, no anthem to be played, and no home to call their own, we welcomed the refugee athletes with the Olympic flag. We played for them the Olympic Anthem. We gave them a home in the Olympic Village. We sent a message of hope and inclusion to the far-too-many refugees and displaced people in our world.

Later, we created the Olympic Refugee Foundation, which provides safe sport opportunities to over one million displaced young people around the world. In this way,

we give them hope and they enrich our Olympic community — just as they are an enrichment to society at large.

In these and the many other efforts of the IOC and the Olympic Movement to put sport at the service of humanity, we are not just promoting sport. We are offering hope: hope through togetherness, hope through dignity, hope through solidarity, and above all: hope for peace.

This is where the values of sport and the values of faith come together. Both inspire us to live with purpose. Both bring out the best in us. And both guide us to live in solidarity and peace with one another.

Creating a culture of peace and giving hope is at the heart of the Olympic mission. For us this means bringing people together – regardless of social or political background, culture, or faith. At the Olympic Games everyone is equal. At the Olympic Games everyone belongs.

To build this culture of peace, we need solidarity. Because: there is no peace without solidarity. And solidarity is one of the most powerful values that sport and faith share.

Already Pierre de Coubertin, our founder and reviver of the modern Olympic Games, understood how deeply faith and sport are connected through shared values. Inspired by his friend, the Dominican priest Henri Didon, he adopted the Olympic motto: Citius, Altius, Fortius. In 2021, with the blessing of His Holiness Pope Francis, we added a word to this historic motto: Communiter – Together – to highlight our conviction that we can only live up our Olympic peace mission through solidarity. Faster, Higher, Stronger – Together.

Looking ahead, it is my sincere hope that with Our Holy Father Pope Leo XIV – who practises sport and appreciates the Olympic values – this meaningful relationship between the Holy See and the Olympic Movement will continue to flourish.

May we continue to walk together on this path of peace, solidarity and hope, always with the joy of sport in our hearts. Together we say: Give Peace a Chance.