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COMMITTEE

Thomas Bach
President

**Speech on the occasion of the adoption of the Olympic Truce Resolution
UN General Assembly, New York, 13 November 2017**

Thank you for the opportunity to address the UN General Assembly once more. Today is an important occasion to reaffirm the values on which both the United Nations and the International Olympic Committee are built.

I would like to thank the President of the UN General Assembly to have emphasised these shared values in such an impressive way earlier this morning. I would also like to thank the Government of the Republic of Korea for submitting this Olympic Truce resolution ahead of the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018. Thank you to the Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of Sport, Monaco and Tunisia, for all their efforts in this process. My gratitude also goes to all the many Member States that have already shown their support for the resolution as co-sponsors.

The shared goal of the UN and the IOC is to make the world a better and more peaceful place. For the IOC, this means putting sport at the service of the peaceful development of humanity. The Olympic Truce resolution in front of you today, is an expression of this shared commitment of both our organisations to humankind.

In ancient Greece, the tradition of the *ekecheria* was a sacred truce between the Greek city states. The Olympic Truce ensured a halt of hostilities, allowing the safe passage and participation of athletes and spectators to the Olympic Games. Then as now, the Olympic Games are a symbol of hope and peace. In our troubled times today, we see that these Olympic Values of peace, solidarity and respect are eternal values.



The resolution “Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal” builds on this 3,000-year-old tradition. The first operative clause of this resolution urges the UN Member States: “to ensure the safe passage, access and participation of athletes, officials and all other accredited persons taking part in the Olympic Winter Games and Paralympic Winter Games.” This specific call is of particular importance, especially with regards to the time and place of these Olympic Winter Games.

By adopting this resolution, the UN General Assembly recognises once more the relevance of the Olympic Games to foster peace and understanding in our fragile world.

Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic Movement, once said: “The Olympic Games are a pilgrimage to the past and an act of faith in the future.”

In the same spirit, the support of the UN Member States for this resolution is an expression of faith by the international community in a peaceful future for our world.

The power of the Olympic Games is their universality and global appeal. Based on our principle of political neutrality, the Olympic Games stand above and beyond all the political differences that divide us. In our fragile world that is drifting apart, the Olympic Games have the power to unite humanity in all its diversity. In our fragile world, polarisation and mistrust are growing. In our fragile world, the Olympic Games always build bridges. They never erect walls.

Sport plays a unique role to put the values of peace, solidarity and respect into action. This important role of sport in society was confirmed by the UN General Assembly when recognising sport in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as an “important enabler”, in particular to foster peace and understanding. The last time that I addressed the UN General Assembly was ahead of the adoption of the Olympic Truce Resolution for the Olympic Games Rio 2016. On that occasion, I announced the creation of the first-ever



Refugee Olympic Team. Their participation at the Olympic Games sent a message of hope to the millions of refugees around the world. It was a demonstration of how sport is this “important enabler”. To make this a reality, we enjoyed the strong cooperation of the United Nations, in particular the UNHCR, whom I would like to thank once more for their continuing support.

Knowing that the motto of this 72nd UN General Assembly is “Focusing on People”, please allow me to address you for a moment as an Olympic athlete myself. I do so because for the Olympic athletes, this resolution will carry a special significance, a deeply personal one. It is the dream of every athlete to compete at the Olympic Games. For us athletes, this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. It is our moment to shine.

With the Olympic Truce resolution, the UN General Assembly is creating the conditions for all athletes to compete in peace. Only the UN Member States can guarantee the athletes a safe passage to the Olympic Games. They make it possible for all the Olympic athletes to realise their dream of a lifetime.

You may ask, why should this matter to the international community? The answer is simple: the Olympic athletes show the whole world that it is possible to compete with each other, while living peacefully together under one roof at the same time.

In the Olympic Village, where the athletes live during the competitions, we see our values of tolerance and respect come to life. Athletes from all National Olympic Committees, from every corner of the world, are living together in harmony under one roof. The athletes live side by side in what is literally a global village. They share their meals, they share their experience and their emotions. They are competitors in sport, but they share their respect for each other in victory and defeat. This is why the athletes are our best ambassadors for our



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ideals and values. The athletes lead by example. Our fragile world needs such symbols of friendship and tolerance more than ever before.

My sincere thanks for their great work go to the Government of the Republic of Korea and to the PyeongChang 2018 Organising Committee under the able leadership of President Lee Hee-beom. They have created the best venues and conditions for the best winter sport athletes in our world. When PyeongChang welcomes the world in just 87 days from today, it will be an important reminder that the Olympic Games are always the time when the international community comes together to celebrate our shared humanity. The IOC would like to reiterate our invitation to everyone to join us at the Olympic Winter Games 2018. In sport, we are all equal. This is why everyone is invited to celebrate our shared values, to celebrate the best of the human spirit, to celebrate our unity in diversity.

The Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018 will give us hope in our troubled times for a better future. The Olympic Games demonstrate that our values of a shared humanity are stronger than all the forces that want to divide us.

With your support today, this Olympic spirit will come alive right here among the nations of the world gathered at the UN General Assembly. This is another example of the fact that Olympic principles are United Nations principles. On behalf of all the athletes in the world, I thank you very much for sharing this Olympic spirit.