



International  
Olympic  
Committee

The President

## Lighting of the Olympic Flame Ceremony for the Olympic Games Paris 2024

Olympia, 16 April 2024

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On this sacred ground where we stand today, the great gift to humankind was born about 2,800 years ago: the Olympic Games.

We are grateful to the Greek people to this very day for this precious gift to all humankind. With the presence of the President of the Hellenic Republic, we are reminded of the direct connection between this ancient heritage and modern Greece. This is why I would like to thank you, Your Excellency, for gracing us with your presence to celebrate this auspicious moment with us.

My thanks and gratitude also go to our hosts, the Hellenic Olympic Committee, under the great leadership of my dear friend Spyros Capralos and the Mayor of Olympia, who are playing such an essential role to preserve this noble heritage.

Since ancient times, there has been an inseparable link between the Olympic Games and peace. The sacred Olympic Truce, the Ekecheiria, was the foundation for the ancient Olympic Games to take place in peace, making them a symbol of hope. This idea of promoting peace and hope through sport was taken up by Pierre de Coubertin when he revived the modern Olympic Games nearly 130 years ago. Always the visionary, he said: "The Olympic Games are a pilgrimage to the past and an act of faith in the future."

The lighting of the Olympic flame for the Olympic Games Paris 2024 is exactly this: a pilgrimage to our past in ancient Olympia, and an act of faith in our future in Paris. What better place to manifest our hope and faith in the future than Paris: the hometown of our beloved founder and reviver of the Olympic Games, Pierre de Coubertin.

In ancient times, the Olympic Games brought together the Greek city states, even – and in particular – during times of war and conflict. Today, the Olympic Games are the only event that brings the entire world together in peaceful competition. Then, as now, the Olympic athletes send this powerful message: yes, it is possible to compete fiercely against each other and at the same time live peacefully together under one roof.

The athletes will shine and show us what greatness humans are capable of with all their excellence, determination and resilience. This power of sport will make the Olympic Games Paris 2024 a great symbol of human excellence and unity of all humankind in all our diversity. These expectations are shared by billions of people around the world. In these difficult times we are living through, with wars and conflicts on the rise, people are fed up with all the hate, the aggression and negative news they are facing day in and day out. In their hearts – in all our hearts – we are longing for something which brings us together. We are longing for something that is unifying. We are longing for something that gives us hope.

The Olympic flame that we are lighting today is the symbol of this hope. This Olympic flame will carry this Olympic spirit from here, our ancient roots, through all of France and finally to Paris – making the City of Light shine even brighter. The Olympic flame will shine over the first Olympic Games inspired by our Olympic Agenda reforms from start to finish. These Olympic Games will be younger, more inclusive, more urban, more sustainable. These will be the very first Olympic Games with full gender parity, because the IOC allocated exactly 50 per cent of the places to female and male athletes.

Our friends from the Paris 2024 Organising Committee, under the remarkable leadership of our friend and Olympian colleague, Tony Estanguet, have done an outstanding job at bringing all these aspects of the Games to life.

My sincere thanks and congratulations already go to the whole Paris 2024 Organising Committee team. Together with all those from the French sports world, and the political

and social entities in France, you have succeeded in reaching an important objective of our Olympic Agenda: creating a legacy for the Games even before the Olympic flame has been lit.

In hosting “Games wide open”, you are making your mark on Olympic history. Your many initiatives and measures to promote physical activity, education, inclusion, equality and a better environment have already had a tangible impact.

With *Terre de Jeux 2024*, you have a remarkable tool that will continue to engage people after the Games. With *Génération 2024* and *Impact 2024*, you have boosted the practice of sport and the Olympic values, particularly among the young generation. Another wonderful legacy is the Olympic Village in Seine-Saint-Denis, which will be transformed into new housing for 6,000 inhabitants. A new Olympic bridge that crosses the Seine links Saint-Denis to the city of Paris. The Aquatics Centre will benefit the inhabitants of an area where half of the children do not know how to swim.

The considerable efforts that have gone into cleaning the River Seine for the Olympic Games competitions will leave a lasting legacy for generations of Parisians and those in the Greater Paris area. Thanks to these efforts, it will be possible to swim in the Seine once again for the first time in 100 years.

What better place to bring to life our Olympic Agenda than Paris?

Paris, the city so dear to our Olympic Movement.

Paris, the birthplace of our founder, Pierre de Coubertin.

Paris, the City of Light where the modern Olympic Games were created.

We are grateful to France and to all the French people who will be hosting these Olympic Games with their great passion for sport. Building on this momentum, we look forward to breathing life into and celebrating – with the entire French population and the whole world – our Olympic motto: Faster, Higher, Stronger – Together.

In this Olympic spirit, the Olympic Games Paris 2024 will be an unforgettable celebration of human excellence – a celebration of our shared humanity.

Long live Greece! Long live the Olympic Games!

And now, *allez les Bleus!*