

ZAPPEION AND THE PRIME MINISTER

I am speaking to you today from Zappeion.

This site played a central role in the revival of the Olympic tradition more than a century ago. It was the first Olympic Village. No place in our country better expresses the loyalty and commitment of Greece to the modern Olympic Games. That is why the headquarters of our bid committee is located, here, in this historic building.

As Prime Minister of Greece, I report with confidence that our country stands in strong, united support for the Athens 2004 Bid. The government is taking actions - day after day, on matters ranging from the budget to protecting the environment - that will establish beyond doubt our ability to host a successful games. Our heritage and our hearts prepare and lead us to this day. Greece has never been more able, suited, or eager to serve as the host of the Olympic Games. Let me be specific and clear:

The governing party and those in opposition support this bid; we all share in the responsibility of making those games a success.

The government offers our full financial backing for the Games.

The organization of the 2004 bid committee has been a success. We hope and expect members of the bid committee will carry on with the organizing committee and hence to build on that success. Our government guarantees that the excellent cooperation enjoyed with the Athens 2004 bid committee will continue in the same manner, should it become the organizing committee of the 2004 games.

We are also hard at work making long-term investments in Greece that will make our economy better integrated in Europe and the world, no matter where these Games are held. Thus, if Greece is honored by the Members of the IOC, to host the 2004 Games, the Olympics will take place in a city with a new airport, new roadways, a new Metro, and a renewed commitment to improving our natural environment.

Every day, Athens is becoming an even better place to hold the kind of Olympics that will bring pride to the Olympic movement. Take a look around our country - it's hard to see Greece and its heritage without also seeing the Olympic Games.

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