

Prime Minister COSTAS SIMITIS
112th Session of the International Olympic Committee
Congress Hall, World Trade Center
Moscow, Russia
15 July 2001

Mr. President, distinguished Members of the International Olympic Committee ladies and gentlemen thank you for inviting me to address you, briefly, this afternoon.

On the occasion of my visit to Russia and the meeting with President Putin, I wish to take the opportunity to extend my warm greetings to the 112th session of the IOC and in particular to President H.A. Samaranch who is stepping down after 20 year of continuous, inspired and hard work for the athletic movement and the Olympic ideals. Mr. President, you will always be known as a champion of athletes and sports, and remembered in my country as a friend of Greece.

Let me also congratulate the people of Beijing for wining the hearts and the support of the Olympic Movement. We will work closely with you, and we will help you in any way we can.

Ladies and gentlemen, you have already heard about the progress Greece has made in preparing for the 2004 Olympic Games. These statements have been made by the Chairman of the IOC Coordination Commission, and by the President of ATHOC, Mrs. Angelopoulos-Daskalaki.

As Prime Minister of Greece, I wanted to add my voice to theirs, and to express to you in plain and direct terms the total and complete commitment of our Government to the success of Athens 2004.

The progress we have made is a result of the total commitment and excellent working relationship between the Greek Government, the organizing committee, state authorities and agencies and, most importantly, of the will of the Greek people.

We put into place a structure that would facilitate a strong, working partnership with ATHOC.

We established an Inter-ministerial committee, which I chair, that involves and coordinates the essential Government actions to prepare for the Games.

We have committed 1.5 trillion drachmas - \$ 3.7 billion US dollars – over and above ATHOC' s budget, for the project and actions associated with the Games and their legacy.

We are taking specific actions that only the Government can take to speed progress on projects, such as the Olympic Village and media villages, that are instrumental to the organization of the Games.

We are carrying forward on the IOC's complete and total commitment to fighting the destructive effect of doping, to protect the integrity and fairness of Olympic competition for all athletes.

We have signed agreements with 37 nations in the area of security, and allocated important sums for capital investments related to security.

Finally, we will enact new legislation that will enable us to increase even further the pace of preparations.

With these actions, and dozens more like them, we are making good on our commitment to host a unique Games on a human scale.

This is a pledge we have made to the Greek people, and the Greek people are standing with us. This is a pledge we make to you, Members of the IOC, and we thank you for standing with us, as well.

We are your partner – in the preparations before the Games, in hosting a successful and safe Olympics, and in leaving for the Movement and the Greek people a legacy that will endure for many generations to come.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, this is a transforming moment for the IOC. You have just made history in selecting a city for the summer of 2008; tomorrow, you will take again an important decision by electing a new President to carry on the tradition started by Demetrios Vikelas and Pierre de Coubertin in 1894. I am sure that we will have with the new elected President the same friendly and constructive cooperation we had with President Samaranch.

The Olympics are central to Greek heritage, and the 2004 Olympics are Key to the future of Greece. In this homecoming of the Games, we will showcase Olympic heritage.

We will showcase the accomplishments of modern Greece. And will showcase all that is good and ennobling in the Olympic movement today.

2,500 years ago Olympic History was born in Ancient Olympia; In 2004 - together – we will make history again.

Σας ευχαριστώ, Thank you.