



INTERNATIONAL
OLYMPIC
COMMITTEE

Thomas Bach
President

Awarding of the Giulio Onesti Prize

Rome, 22 May 2015

- check against delivery -

Dear President of the Giulio Onesti Foundation My colleague and good friend
Franco Carraro
Madame Minister of Education and Research
Dear President of the National Olympic Committee of Italy
Dear IOC Members in Italy
Dear Presidents of the International Federations
Dear Olympians
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen

E' un piacere éssere qui òggi, tra tanti càri amìci e' tra tanti amìci dello spòrt

(It is a pleasure to be here today among so many friends and so many friends of sport)

Thank you for the great honour of being awarded the Giulio Onesti Prize.
It is an immense privilege to receive it, especially since other recipients include Italian sporting icons Alberto Tomba, Sara Simeoni and Pietro Mennea, as well as my predecessors, Juan Antonio Samaranch and Jacques Rogge.

I feel even more proud that this Prize is named after a great man who made his mark on the history of the Olympic Movement in Italy and beyond.

Throughout his life, Giulio Onesti, known as the “avvocato”, was a fervent advocate and defender of our Movement and its principles.

For, like us today, he knew the power of sport to play a positive role in a fragile, threatened society.

This is what he said in 1966, during his opening speech at the 64th IOC Session in Rome. I would like to take this moment to read a passage from that speech which remains as relevant today as when he delivered it nearly half a century ago.

“From 1894 to today, the world has gone through sad moments; and more than once has it appeared that pity and charity had vanished from the minds of mankind. But the IOC continued, without hesitation whatsoever, to preach its words of equality and fraternity.

Whilst others suggested discrimination, hate and homicide to peoples, the IOC continued to repeat that all men are equal, without difference in political faith, race or religion. We all owe an immense sense of gratitude and homage to this new Pantheon of human civilisation.

We shall show such sentiments by having constant respect for an organisation that is above us, but also in us.

May we have the good fortune to see, during the course of our life, application amongst people and continents of the high principles that the IOC has indicated and repeated.

May we continue to witness events of joy and loyal competition amongst youth from all corners of the earth.

May stadia, gymnasiums and sports fields be the only venues for encounters and combat.

May it be throughout all schools that lessons be taught for love and reciprocal respect, such as been dictated from the pulpit of the IOC even in those dark days when hate seemed to have had the upper hand.

These are the sentiments that we not only agree with, but preach within the precincts of our sports habitat, and we wish to solemnly reconfirm here at this happy festival of world sport.”

Dear friends,

Almost 50 years later, these words still ring true today down to the very last sentence. He was a true visionary and we can be proud of his message; that all people are equal in sport; that in sport there is a fraternity; that the values of sport can play a valuable role in education. All these were addressed in Olympic Agenda 2020, our road map for the future of the Olympic Movement. And I am sure that Giulio Onesti would have wanted have taken part in this discussion and would be looking down with approval at what we have done. The value of sport cannot be put better than he did in the passage I just read. His words are so good in fact that they could have been used in the introduction of Olympic Agenda 2020. It shows also how strong and enduring our Olympic Values are but also the challenges that we continue to face. We cannot be complacent. We must defend those values at all times. We are constantly challenged by a society more fragile and more hostile on the one hand but also a society which offers more opportunities to communicate and share our message on the other. We have to maintain our values but we also have to continue to adapt our approach. Society is constantly coming up with more questions to which we need to find the answers. This was one of the motivations behind the reforms of Olympic Agenda 2020.

Our values, of excellence, of respect, of friendship, need to be defended, and I am glad to be here to accept this award which gives me the opportunity to be among you here in Italy. You stand for these values, for the defence of these values. It makes me feel at home here among friends.

I am very proud to receive the Giulio Onesti Prize.

Gràzie ancòra per l'accolgiénza caloròsa. E' bèllo vedère che lo spòrt ha così tanti amici in questa grànde nazione olímpica

(Thank you once again for the warm welcome it is good to see that sport has so many friends in this great Olympic nation)

