Sport is playing an increasingly important role in a world of changing economic, political, cultural and social systems.

We are currently living in a golden age of Sport. Since ancient times, never has sport occupied such an important place in society as today. This status has largely been achieved by the athletes themselves, inspired by sporting excellence, and also by the positive impact of staging highly successful Olympic Games. "Unforgettable, dream Games", as they have often been described after their conclusion.

The Olympic Games are undoubtedly the world's major sporting event.
The Olympic Games are the only event that has the power to involve the whole world and to bring a social, urban and economic regeneration to a city.
The Olympic rings, the main symbol of the Olympic movement - which is the most recognised symbol in the world - is universally seen as embodying highly positive values.

The critical challenge to keep the Games a primary event is to preserve *these values* associated with the Games in modern society.

The Olympic Games are unique because of the way they provide a role model for youngsters, are a source of national pride, and are a symbol of unity, friendship and international cooperation.

Olympic athletes have described participating in the Olympic Games as being "the most important moment of their sporting career". This is the strength of the Games. Every athlete in an Olympic sport recognises the value and the importance of participating in such an event. Why is it so much more important to win an Olympic medal rather than a World Championship medal?

The answer is in the values – recognised by people everywhere – that the Olympic Games represent. The appeal of these values and how they attract the world's attention is confirmed by how they are used in the Olympic Games communication campaigns.

The Beijing organisers knew that hosting successful Olympic Games relied on, amongst many other things, capturing the imagination of the people of the host country and the rest of the world. The Beijing Olympic slogan was: "One World, One Dream". In its reach and its simplicity, this slogan clearly aims to express *the unity of humanity* and the shared global dream embodied in the Olympic Games.

Athens 2004 offered its hospitality to the world with "Welcome Home", a theme that goes back to the *ancient Games*. Salt Lake City 2002 was "Light the Fire Within", focusing on the power of the *Olympic flame to inspire*. Sydney 2000 invoked *global participation* with "Share the Spirit".

That Sport must play an important role in the education of the young generations was the conviction of Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympic Movement.
The big issue is: how can we continue to keep the appeal of the Olympic Games alive among the younger generations?

We all know that our youngsters have many distractions that draw them away from the Olympic Games and indeed from sport in general, yet this is what we must focus on. Our youth must be the privileged audience, as it is they that our message is first and foremost addressed to.

I have had the privilege to live three Olympics in my country. The Cortina 1956 Winter Olympic Winter Games, the XVII Olympic Games in Rome in 1960 as a young boy and recently the Torino 2006 Winter Olympic Games as the President of CONI. One Summer and two Winter Olympics. They all have made history in my country.

This has taught me that the Olympic Games needs to be managed by an organisation that must be strong and financially independent. As Giulio Onesti stated, "Sport to the people of Sport", to highlight the importance of the autonomy of Sport. Giulio Onesti was President of CONI for 32 years, IOC member from 1964 to 1981, among the founders of the World Association of National Olympic Committees and also the European Olympic Committees and IOC Olympic Solidarity, and was the man who built the autonomy of Italian Sport, delivering a model that is still considered to be avant-garde. The IOC, the NOCs and IFs must continue this work and all together cooperate in defining the autonomy of Sport today together with Governments.

The economic importance of the Olympic Games is shown by the interest of great cities and nations to organise them. The IOC and the Olympic Games are in good shape! We have seen here a great competition to assign the 2016 Summer Olympics. Four big cities from four different continents have presented excellent projects. Chicago, Madrid, Rio de Janeiro and Tokyo have come into play, analyzing their sport heritage, and planning new urban and sport infrastructures to present strong candidatures.

The core element of the Olympic Games is the Sports programme. It must, as I have already said, comply with the expectations of the young generations of tomorrow. Cities are elected seven years ahead and the sport programme changes on the basis of a seven

year interval. The IOC has met this need by implementing a process of review of the programme in order to ensure that it is in line with the young generations' tastes in the decades to come.

The Olympics are the icon of the life we all wish to live: a clean existence where competence, respect and professionalism still win over trickery and subterfuge. To keep the Games at this level means to fight against Doping. Doping damages the athletes and the image of the Olympic Games dramatically! Yet, with the creation of World Antidoping Agency, major steps forward have been made in this area. The great increase in the number of tests conducted at the Olympic Games is a strong deterrent.

Lastly, the mission of the International Olympic Committee is to promote Olympism and to ensure the regular celebration of the Olympic Games.
Vancouver is around the corner and the final months of preparations are going well.
The Torino Organisers have passed the baton to the Vancouver team. The motto of the 2006 Torino Winter Olympic Games was "Passion Lives Here" Let us continue to pursue this mission with "Glowing Hearts"!