



INTERNATIONAL
OLYMPIC
COMMITTEE

Thomas Bach
President

Lighting of the Olympic Flame Ceremony for the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 Olympia, 12 March 2020

We are gathered here today in Olympia, the very place where over 3,000 years ago the Olympic Games were born.

We are grateful to the Greek people to this very day for this precious gift to humankind. This is why I would like to thank the President of the Hellenic Republic, Prokopios Pavlopoulos, for honouring us with his presence today and for demonstrating the direct connection between modern Greece and this noble heritage.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to our host today, the President of the Hellenic Olympic Committee, Spyros Capralos. We are especially grateful that you made today's ceremony possible even under difficult circumstances. This demonstrates once more our commitment to the success of the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020. 19 weeks before the opening ceremony we are strengthened in this commitment by the many authorities and sports organisations around the world who are taking so many significant measures to contain the spread of coronavirus

Since ancient times, the Olympic Games have always been a symbol of peace and hope. Already the founder of the International Olympic Committee, Pierre de Coubertin saw the Olympic Games as a unique way to promote peace among nations and all people. Today the Olympic Games are the only event that brings the entire world together in peaceful competition. This unifying power of the Olympic Games is today at least as relevant as it was in Coubertin's time.

The Olympic Games are a powerful demonstration of the unity of humanity in all our diversity.

Our Japanese friends are interpreting this noble mission of the Olympic Games in an outstanding way. Japan will demonstrate its ground-breaking innovation and boundless creative energy with regards to sustainability, technology and human-centred growth.



Already now, I would like to thank the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee, with all their team, for the excellent preparation for these Games. The Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 are being delivered by an all-star all-Japan team, with outstanding support and cooperation from all levels of government. With incredible efficiency, effectiveness and enthusiasm, they are taking the famous Japanese reliability to the next level.

Today marks the beginning of the journey of the Olympic Flame to Japan. When the Olympic Flame returns to Tokyo after 56 years, hope will light the way across the entire country. The Olympic Flame represents our hope for a better future. Back in 1964, the first Olympic Games in Asia marked a new beginning for a peaceful and dynamic Japan among the family of nations. The Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 will again be a symbol of hope and confidence for all Japanese people, especially so in the regions affected by the devastating natural disasters nine years ago.

We are grateful to the Japanese people who are embracing these Games with such enthusiasm. The Japanese people will welcome the entire world with open arms as the 11,000 best athletes from 206 National Olympic Committees and the IOC Refugee Olympic Team come together in Tokyo.

[in Japanese: Thank you to all our Japanese friends]

It is this universality that makes the Olympic Games so unique. At the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 we will stand together, united in all our diversity. We will be united by our commitment to the Olympic Values. We will be united by our emotions. This makes each and every one of us a member of this unique Olympic community. This Olympic community will show the entire world that our shared humanity is stronger than all the forces that want to divide us.

[in Japanese: We are looking forward with great joy and appreciation to celebrate this Olympic spirit together in Tokyo]