



INTERNATIONAL
OLYMPIC
COMMITTEE

Thomas Bach
President

Speech
on the occasion of
Opening Ceremony
Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games
Sochi, 7 February 2014

Good evening Sochi
Good evening Russia

Good evening dear Athletes,
Mr President of the Russian Federation,
Mr Secretary General of the United Nations,
Dear Olympic friends and fans around the world!
Welcome to the 22nd Olympic Winter Games!

Tonight, we are writing a new page in Olympic history.

These are the first ever Olympic Games organised in the new Russia. We have come here with great respect for the rich and varied history of Russia, and for the many peoples who have always been part of this country. The Russians' deep desire for their own wintersport resort was so great because of their passion for sports on snow and ice. What took decades in other parts of the world, has been achieved here in just seven years. This is a remarkable achievement.

I would like to thank in particular the President of the Russian Federation and his government,
the Sochi Organising Committee, the Russian Olympic Committee and the IOC Members in Russia for their outstanding determination, commitment and their dedication to Olympic sports.

Thank you to all the workers for your great contribution under sometimes difficult circumstances.

Thank you to all the people of Sochi and the Krasnodar region. Thank you for your patience, thank you for your understanding during these years of transformation. Now you are living in an Olympic Region. I am sure you will enjoy the benefits for many, many years to come.

Thousands of volunteers have welcomed us with the well-known warm Russian hospitality. Many thanks to all the volunteers. *Bolshoi spasiba, valantyoram!*

Russia and the Russians have set the stage for you, the best winter athletes on our planet.

From this moment on you are not only the best athletes, you are Olympic Athletes. You will inspire us with your outstanding sports performances.

You have come here for sport.

You have come here with your Olympic dream.

The International Olympic Committee wants your Olympic Dream to come true. This is why we are investing almost all of our revenues in the worldwide development of sports.

The universal Olympic rules apply to each and every athlete- no matter where you come from or what your background is. You are living together in the Olympic Village. You will celebrate victory with dignity and accept defeat with dignity. You are bringing the Olympic Values to life.

In this way, the Olympic Games, wherever they take place, set an example for a peaceful society. Olympic Sport unites the people.

This is the Olympic Message the athletes spread to the host country and to the whole world:

-Yes, it is possible to strive even for the greatest victory with respect for the dignity of your competitors.

-Yes, it is possible - even as competitors- to live together under one roof in harmony, with tolerance and without any form of discrimination for whatever reason.

-Yes, it is possible - even as competitors - to listen, to understand and to give an example for a peaceful society.

Olympic Games are always about building bridges to bring people together.

Olympic Games are never about erecting walls to keep people apart.

Olympic Games are a sports festival embracing human diversity in great unity.

Therefore I say to the political leaders of the world:

- Thank you for supporting your athletes - they are the best ambassadors of your country.

- Please respect their Olympic Message of good will, of tolerance, of excellence and of peace.

- Have the courage to address your disagreements in a peaceful, direct political dialogue and not on the backs of these athletes.

To all sports officials and sports fans I say:

- Join and support our fight for fair play - the athletes deserve it.

And to you - my fellow Olympic Athletes - I say:

- Respect the rules

- Play fair

- Be clean

- Respect your fellow athletes in and out of competition.

We all wish you joy in your Olympic effort and a wonderful Olympic experience.

To all of you - Athletes, Officials, Spectators and Fans around our globe - I say:
Enjoy the Olympic Winter Games in Sochi 2014!

And now I have the honour of inviting the President of the Russian Federation, Mister Vladimir Putin, to declare open the 22nd Olympic Winter Games, Sochi, Russia.