



International
Olympic
Committee

The President

50th anniversary of the International Pierre de Coubertin Committee

Olympic Museum, 19 January 2025

It is a great honour and privilege to celebrate this 50th anniversary together with you. Today we celebrate not only a remarkable milestone of the International Pierre de Coubertin Committee. We also celebrate the timeless vision of our beloved founder.

The idea that sport is universal and serves a higher purpose for all human beings was central to the thinking of Pierre de Coubertin. For him, the Olympic Games were always much more than just a sporting event. When he founded the International Olympic Committee 131 years ago, he saw it as a way to promote greater understanding among all nations and people of the world. He wanted to make the world a better place through sport and its values. This remains the overarching mission of the IOC and the entire Olympic Movement to this day.

For half a century, the International Pierre de Coubertin Committee has been at the forefront to promote the study of Coubertin's work and vision. Your impressive global network of historians, scholars and researchers is a truly unique community of Coubertin experts. Through your dedication to research, analysis and documentation, you ensure that Coubertin's Olympic vision continues to resonate across generations and around the world.

All of you are playing an important role to deepen our understanding of his legacy and the historical context of his thinking. Over the past 50 years, the Committee and its remarkable members have fostered an impressive body of scholarship and research.

From Jacques Guhl, who captured the essence of his personal friend's philosophy in his seminal work "L'âme de Coubertin"; to the late Norbert Müller, whose groundbreaking research laid the foundation for modern Coubertin studies; to Jean Durry who keeps uncovering countless details of Coubertin's life, offering fresh perspectives on his genius

Permettez-moi de remercier mon ami Jean Durry pour le grand nombre de conversations qui m'ont inspiré beaucoup pendant les années de préparations pour les JO Paris 2024; to George Hirthler, who through his novel "The Idealist" has brought Coubertin's vision to a global audience. Thanks to the dedication and the passion of all of you and other intellectuals, your Committee has laid a strong foundation to preserve, analyse and disseminate the rich heritage of Coubertin.

Carrying this historic mission into the future is your mission now. Under the leadership of your president Stephan Wassong, you have every reason to look to the future with great confidence. I would like to sincerely thank Stephan Wassong for his tireless work. In your working groups you have discussed and planned for a sustainable future of the IPCC. Through the many initiatives you are blending Coubertin's timeless principles with modern interdisciplinary approaches. Your commitment ensures that Coubertin's legacy not only endures but continues to evolve to meet the needs of our modern society. For this important mission, I wish you all the very best and every success. Your work is of fundamental importance for all of us in the Olympic Movement. Because it is only by understanding the man, his life and the times he lived in, that we can truly appreciate the genius of Pierre de Coubertin.

The boldness of his vision becomes even clearer when placed in the historical context of the late 19th century. At a time when nationalism and militarism were on the rise, Coubertin was promoting a radically different world view.

Always the visionary, he said: "Should the institution of the Olympic Games prosper, it can become a potent factor in securing universal peace."

As the world's foremost Coubertin scholars, you of course know very well what these words meant at the time. In a very hostile geopolitical environment, he managed to establish Olympic Games that would bring together athletes from nations that were then politically sworn enemies.

Coubertin was what we could call today a peace activist. When we see how Coubertin went against all the divisive and bellicose trends of the time, we can only admire his courage and audacity.

To achieve this Coubertin created the concept of international sport – sport for all, with the same rules for everyone, everywhere. This system is still in place today.

The Olympic Games and this international sport system have stood the test of time.

The Olympic Games Paris 2024 were the most recent example of the relevance of Coubertin's vision in our times: despite all the geopolitical tensions, we were able to bring together the athletes from the territories of all 206 National Olympic Committees and the IOC Refugee Olympic Team in Paris. They competed fiercely against each other. At the same time, they lived peacefully together under one roof in the Olympic Village, even if many of their countries are at war. The athletes showed us how our world would be, if we all were to live in the Olympic spirit of peaceful co-existence.

This message of togetherness, of joie de vivre – this message of peace: this is what made the Olympic Games Paris 2024 a truly global celebration of unity of humankind in all our diversity. These Olympic Games captured the hearts and minds around the globe: around 5 billion people followed them, making these the most followed Olympic Games ever.

The Olympic Games Paris 2024 are perhaps the best illustration that Coubertin's visionary ideas are as relevant today as they were during his time. Then as now, war and conflicts are on the rise. Then as now, people around the world are longing for something that gives us hope for a better future.

As we celebrate his legacy, we see just how important it is to have a historical perspective of the man and times he lived in.

This is why the work of the International Pierre de Coubertin Committee is so essential. For 50 years, you have worked tirelessly to deepen our knowledge of Coubertin and to explain why his vision remains relevant to this day.

If Pierre de Coubertin is watching us from his Olympic heights today, I know that he would be so pleased to see us all gathered here, in the knowledge that thanks to the dedication of all of you, his vision continues to live and shine even brighter in the future.

In order to do so, let us be inspired by our founder, who taught us to always build bridges through sport. In this way, we are living our Olympic motto: Faster, Higher, Stronger – Together. Once again, all my congratulations on this milestone and all my best wishes for the next 50 years and beyond.