Speech by Lord Killanin,  
President of the IOC

Last year, the International Olympic Committee held its session in Varna following the Olympic Congress. It is possible that the Session was overwhelmed by the amount of work that had been put into the Congress. Since then, the report on the Congress has been published and the points are being studied by all of those concerned, including the IOC Tripartite Commission which has met in Vienna.

This Session in the capital of Austria will take us a step forward in the development and evolution of the Olympic movement.

There are critics who say we do not move fast enough, and others who suggest we move too rapidly.

It would be appropriate at this opening ceremony to highlight the points which must be discussed in Vienna.

A matter of paramount importance is the selection of the cities for the 1980 Games. Having heard the presentations of the candidate cities and the technical views of the International Federations, the International Olympic Committee will vote on its choice of cities for 1980. This is the most important decision which the International Olympic Committee has to make every four years and I hope that our members will consider every aspect of the candidatures so that a correct decision is made. At the same time, the unsuccessful candidates should not be disheartened for there is always another Olympiad and no candidate can be successful every time.

The agenda for this session is long and includes a number of proposed rule changes. Some are of a minor nature but it is intended during the coming year to revise the rule book so that there are basic rules accompanied by instructions, bye-laws or standing orders. I would not be indiscreet in saying that the frequent amending of and adding to rules over the years has led to contradictions and translations have frequently been incomplete. It is essential that all translations must be subject to careful checking especially from the legal point of view.

The most important discussion will take place on Rule 26—the eligibility to be an Olympic competitor. The Olympic Games are a gathering of amateurs, non-professionals, but the changing social climate in the world, the spread of interest in sport, to which the Olympic movement has contributed, and many other factors must lead to a fresh appreciation of this rule.

Here in Austria you are fully aware of the problems of this rule which were highlighted in the Winter Games at Sapporo. Unfortunately, skiing with its concentrated season and limited locations with high commercial interests has been one of the sports which has both given and faced more problems. In two years’ time the Winter Games will take place for the second time at Innsbruck following the inability of the successful candidate to carry out its bid. It is to be
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It is no longer a question of each individual athlete being able to afford to compete in the Olympic Games. All countries do not have equal opportunities and it is easier for some countries, whether through government or private sources, to finance the development of sport throughout the period of an Olympiad, culminating with the Olympic Games. This enables their competitors to receive high competition experience and training, but there are many other countries which for social and economic reasons do not have these facilities. This is why the International Olympic Committee must bear in mind the social and economic problems of all National Olympic Committees as well as those of the individual competitor.

Following eligibility, the next consideration must be the policy regarding the long-term Olympic programme. I am not referring to the miniscule reduction of the number of sports or events in particular, but the principle as to whether all sports currently on the programme should remain and whether new sports should be added to the programme in view of their increasing popularity. It will be necessary for the International Olympic Committee to consider criteria for an Olympic sport. There are those who believe that team sports should be eliminated and that none should be added. There are others who believe that team sports, especially those which can be played with the same facilities as other sports in a covered gymnasium, are viable and because of their increasing popularity should be included. There is fairly general agreement that any additional sports that might either receive the overall approval of the International Olympic Committee or be added as compulsory or optional sports to the programme, should be those which are judged by the clock, by the stop-watch, the tape or by the scoring of points such as goals, but not by the individual opinion of judges or by demanding expensive equipment. There are also proposals regarding the spread of the Olympic Games beyond a city’s limits. These points were raised at Varna and are being studied.

There are other worrying aspects, not only for the Olympic Games, but for sport in general. The greatest of these is the fact that the athlete is forgotten except at the moment he stands victorious on the podium. The Games are for the athletes; their performances have been encouraged by spectators in the arena and throughout the world on television. Frequently the athletes are becoming not only victims of commercial exploitation and temptation, but also of political manoeuvring.

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hoped that with wisdom the new rules will be obeyed and thus ensure the future of the Winter Games.

No one believes that what we decide here will stand for ever, but I do sincerely hope that members of the International Olympic Committee will up-date the rule, so while excluding professionals from the Olympic Games we will ensure that all have an opportunity to compete equally.
they have been prevented from competing against another athlete, especially in contact sports, because their administrators do not agree with the national or political attitude of the government of the country from which their opponents emanate. This is not sport.

It is not compulsory to take part in the Olympic Games, nor to take part in any international events, whether between individuals or countries. It is compulsory for any individual, competitor, National Olympic Committee or national federation, once it has accepted an invitation to compete in an official event, to comply with the rules and compete against all-comers.

On behalf of the International Olympic Committee I appeal to every single sportsman and woman not to come to the Olympic Games if they wish to make use of sport for political purposes. This is something on which both sportsmen and administrators must unite on a common front.

It is also mandatory for an individual sportsman, a team, a national federation or a National Olympic Committee once it has accepted an invitation to compete in any recognised events, whether in the Olympic Games or international competitions, not to discriminate against any other competitor, whether individual or team, for political or other reasons. It is more discerning to decline an invitation rather than accept it and then withdraw on political grounds during the competition.

Those who do not compete, for political reasons, risk elimination of the individual, the team or the National Olympic Committee. The athlete must be encouraged in every way to develop his prowess and his completeness as a man or woman, but must not only be protected against commercialisation, which is the prerogative of the professional, but also against any political exploitation.

If this is not done, the principle of the Olympic movement, which is to find the common denominator between men and women whatever their race, creed or political beliefs may be, is destroyed. We all have our own beliefs; we all have our friends and enemies; but the aim of the Olympic movement is to subjugate these in the fellowship which is enshrined in the intertwining Olympic rings representing the five continents of the world, wedded together in sport, peace and friendship. If this is not accomplished then the Olympic movement and all sport, whether amateur or professional, is doomed. Instead of progressing towards the common ideals, we shall retreat into barbarism.

The problems of Olympic “eligibility” or “commercialisation” are relegated to unimportance compared with this dangerous and destructive element.

Remember the motto of last year’s Congress—sport for a world of peace. That is our aim—we must reach it.

L. K.