

**Dear IOC President,**

**Dear EOC President,**

**Dear ANOC President,**

**Dear Friends and Colleagues,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is for me a great honor and an immense pleasure to welcome you in our stunning city of Rome, which all of you know for its millennium tradition and its well-regarded hospitality.

I am sincerely moved because I feel the responsibility of my role, but I also feel that I am here today to represent an Olympic Committee, respected and recognized by you all for its organizational abilities, its historical respect of the Olympic Charter and its values, but also for the undeniable quality that its managers have been showing over the years at all levels, both within the IOC and in the International Federations, and to whom I want to express my gratitude.

Today, it is for me a beginning, as I was elected at the head of the Italian Olympic Committee only 9 months ago. But, throughout my career, I had the opportunity to meet many of you, and thus I don't feel like a novice, but as a member of the Family. The big European Olympic Family, guided by President Hickey whom I would like to thank for the faith and the esteem he gave us over all these years and that he will undoubtedly continue to give us in the next future.

I am not the only one to experience a "beginning" in this context. For the IOC President, our friend Thomas Bach, this Assembly that has already seen him in other functions in the past, represents a first time since his election at the head of the International Olympic Committee.

Same thing for the ANOC President, our friend Sheikh Al Sabah, who is in Rome for the first time since he has been elected as President of Association of the national Olympic Committees.

Last but not the least, I would like to sincerely thank, on behalf of all of us, the one who carried with steadiness and wisdom, together with expertise and skills, the fate of the Olympic Movement over the last 12 years: Jacques Rogge.

We are all very proud to have the chance to welcome in our city and our country such a prestigious and highly qualified Assembly, which highlights even more the development of our movement and strengthens our role in the promotion of the Olympic values.

The Italian Olympic Committee has been one of the instigators of the Foundation of the Association of the National Olympic Committees throughout an intuition of one of my

prestigious predecessors, Giulio Onesti, who has also been a distinguished IOC member for decades.

On the occasion of this Assembly, many important decisions will be taken, and especially the one regarding the election of the new EOC Executive Board for the next quadrennium.

I would like to send my personal esteem and admiration to all the candidates for what they have been doing until now and what they will surely continue to do after the elections.

CONI is about to celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. On June 9<sup>th</sup>, we will celebrate with a great event this important anniversary that some colleagues have already had the privilege to celebrate. You are all kindly invited to the event, together with your Ladies, and I encourage you to save the date on your agenda from now!

Rome has always been an open city, it has always been *Caput Mundi*. Our home is also your home. It has been this way for almost 100 years, it will remain like this in the future. You are all welcome!

Italy, Rome and the Italian National Olympic Committee are welcoming you with open arms and have only one word: on behalf of the Italian sport, THANK YOU!