

Address
by Mr. EPAM. PETRALIAS (GRE)
President of the International Olympic Academy
Secretary General of the Hellenic Olympic Committee
at the opening session
of the 1st International Session for Educationists

With deep joy and emotion I wish to welcome you to this world cultural centre of international sports, the International Olympic Academy. The foundation and successful operation of this institution for thirteen consecutive years is due to the unshakable faith of Greek people in Olympic ideals, to the valuable assistance of the Greek Government which is expressed in many ways and to the moral support of the International Olympic Committee.

Special lecturers will talk to you at length about the aims, the objective and the cultural work carried out by the International Olympic Academy.

We believe that sports and competitions should not be considered as mere physical activities or actions, or as a show of remarkable strength, but as biological functions which require the complete, harmonious and symmetrical cooperation between the soul, the mind and the body, so as to create what the Ancient Greeks called «beauty». Beauty encompasses the idea of man and the motion of his fulfilment and perfection. Athletic competitions are based on moral and ideological foundations.

It is known that already at the time of the Ancient Greeks, great importance was given to the athletic performance of youth, not only as a means of achieving the athletic development of the body and securing good health for individuals, but mainly as a means of harmonizing the overall formation of man, always in accordance with the strict law of propriety and measure. It may be a simple task to develop the physical abilities of a talented youth through intensive physical exercise and increase his muscular strength, his technical knowledge and improve his performance, but it is not that simple to make of that able athlete a perfect human being who will combine the joy of physical perfection with the satisfaction deriving from a noble soul and a highly cultured mind.

We have not gathered here, in the International Olympic Academy, in order to discuss the various problems relating to sports or the individual objectives



of physical education. We are fully aware of the fact that if exercise occupies an important position in overall education and if its effects are well understood, this will make it possible to raise the level of education.

We have assembled here in order to discuss with you and help you in preparing a reform, in the wider sense of the word, which will contribute to the enrichment of the education of youth, towards a wider culture of the mind. I believe that only when we realize the part played by physical exercise and sports in general in the educational system as a whole, will it be possible for us to understand that physical education, when practised correctly, can become a decisive and major tool for the cultural and moral development of people.

Allow me to say that your contribution to the investigation of the subjects we will be discussing during this Session is of fundamental importance and I believe that through your participation and the contribution of your great educational skill, your historical and philosophical knowledge and your warm and sincere cooperation, the International Olympic Academy will move a long step forward and Ancient Olympia will prove that it remains the world centre for the formation of the perfect man, endowed with both virtue and beauty.

With these few thoughts I welcome you here, wishing you a happy stay and fruitful days of work and I declare the opening of the 1st International Session for Educationists.

