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**World Forum “Sport and World of Harmony: The Role of Olympic Education and Culture”
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Pierre de Coubertin Youth Forums

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Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends,

It is my task now to talk about the international Pierre de Coubertin Youth Forums.

As president of the International Pierre de Coubertin Committee (IPCC), not only the keeping of Coubertin’s ideas matters to me, but also how young people perceive those ideas and which possibilities they have to translate them into practice, how they can live out Olympism and how they can in future help forming the Olympic Movement in their home countries.

Since 1990, the IPCC has been in close contact with those schools worldwide carrying Pierre de Coubertin’s name or, in some cases, those being strongly related with the historic founding of the International Olympic Committee. Furthermore, we were able to encourage the foundation of new Pierre de Coubertin Schools.

At present, there are 50 Coubertin Schools worldwide; unfortunately still not enough. Among them are kindergartens, primary schools, junior and senior high schools in the following countries: Austria, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, France, Greece, Great Britain, India, Italy, Kenya, Russia, Slovakia, Tunisia and Uruguay. We have set ourselves the goal to have at least one Coubertin School in each country by 2010. The IOC President Samaranch suggested that idea already in 1997 via a circular letter addressed to all National Olympic Committees. In addition, we want to achieve the manifestation of Coubertin and his work in the countries’ curricula, particularly in subjects like world history, philosophy and physical education.

The Coubertin Schools have different orientations: Font Romeu (FRA), Erfurt and Berlin (GER) are boarding schools specialised in sports, teaching further participants of Olympic Games. Until today, the Coubertin School Erfurt in itself has brought out 19 Olympic champions in swimming, speed skating, track and field, bobsleigh and cycling. Other Coubertin Schools like in Pirgos (close to Olympia), Greece or the William Penny Brookes School in Much Wenlock, England devoted themselves especially to the Olympic History and have their own school museums. Another example would be the senior high school in Radstadt (AUT), that completes the Olympic thought of education with its musical emphasis. Olympism thus finds its divers expression within the Coubertin Schools, which stresses the Olympic tradition and therefore the prevailing country's own identity. This means Olympic Education in its true sense.

The IPCC has set up a list of criteria, which need to be accomplished in order to become a Pierre de Coubertin School:

1. *The head, staff and pupils/students should understand and acknowledge the importance of Pierre de Coubertin and his contribution. The school community should be encouraged to view him as an inspirational figure, with much to contribute to the development of young people in the world today.*
2. *The school should demonstrate the significance of Coubertin in clearly identifiable ways. For example:*
 - *including a photo of Coubertin in the School Prospectus and/or Yearbook and explaining the pedagogical principles;*
 - *installing a photo or a sculpture of Coubertin in a highly visible area of the school;*
 - *incorporating Pierre de Coubertin, his ideas and his life in various subjects (e.g. history, languages, sports, citizenship, general studies), even where this is not a compulsory element of the curriculum;*
 - *making special presentations about the life and work of Coubertin (e.g. on 23rd June, recognised as "Olympic Day");*
 - *organising special events that demonstrate the importance of Coubertin to the school.*
3. *The school should emphasise that Pierre de Coubertin was not only responsible for the rebirth of the modern Olympic Games, but also an educational reformer, believing in the importance of bringing body, soul and will into harmony.*

This leads logically to the profile of a Coubertin School:

4. *Physical Education should have a specific significance in its overall educational values, aims and objectives. In addition to physical and intellectual education, cultural values (e.g. music, fine arts, literature, ethics, and traditional sports) should also be emphasised in the educational program of a Coubertin School. A Coubertin School may be a school which specialises in sports, but it could also be a specialist performing arts school, as long as physical education is emphasised in order to ensure a coherent and harmonious over all education.*

5. *To put this spirit into effect, the “Coubertin Award” of the CIPC is crucial. It should be organised regularly at the school and as many pupils/students as possible should take part.*
6. *Once a year (1st December) the Coubertin School should send a report of its Coubertin related activities to the CIPC General Secretary.*
7. *The CIPC will support the school through the provision of information and resources, including the writings of Coubertin, and also, if requested, through the provision of specific material (videos, documentation for the “Coubertin Award”, etc.). Every two years the school will be invited to participate in the International Pierre de Coubertin Youth Forum.*
8. *The naming of the school should be a celebration. Representatives of the CIPC, the family of Pierre de Coubertin and the National Olympic Committee of the country should be invited.*

The school should submit its proposal to the board of CIPC and a representative of the Coubertin family, in order to be granted authorisation to use the name “Pierre de Coubertin School”.
9. *In order to achieve the official status of “Coubertin School” the school must be a member of the CIPC. The head or a delegate of the school will be member of a working group which will be kept informed of and consulted upon the biannual International Coubertin Youth Forum.*
10. *Schools, which are still in the process of becoming the legal status of “Coubertin School”, may be recognised as “Observer School” for two years and this way send a small number of observers to the Youth Forum. After two years a final decision on the legal status of becoming a “Coubertin School” has to be made by the responsible school authorities.*

The Pierre de Coubertin Forum takes place every two years, always in a different country. Each school can send up to 8 students (boys and girls) between the age of 16 and 18 and two accompanying teachers. The IPCC supports the Coubertin Schools with materials they can use in lessons and which serve as preparation for the Youth Forum. Together with the IOC, the IPCC supports the stay at the venue financially; the participants mostly reside in youth hostels. Each participating school pays for their own travelling expenses.

The Youth Forum is not only meant to be an opportunity for young people to experience cultural exchange and to meet people from different parts of the world, the Youth Forum, too, has been filled with content on basis of Coubertin’s educational ideas. Therefore, the IPCC developed the international Coubertin-Award. It consists of 5 different performances and, as individual achievement test, has been the centre of attention during each Youth Forum.

The 5 performances are

1. Knowledge about Coubertin, the Olympic Movement and the Olympic Values

2. Sport practice performances

- Cross country race (*no time limit – girls: 2000m – boys: 3000m*)
- Long jump ancient Greek style with weights (= by holding “halteres” like the ancient Greeks – each weighs 800 grams)
- Discus or javelin throwing (*Discus (1 kg for girls) 16 meters
Discus (1,5kg for boys) 18 meters
Javelin (400 grams for girls): 18 meters
Javelin (600 grams for boys): 22 meters*)
- Swimming (*300 meters Time limit: 8:00 min for girls, 7:30 min for boys*)

3. Arts performance as individual or group presentation

4. Social performance: activities at home during the months before the Youth Forum, e.g. support people who need help, protection of environment, leaders in youth commissions, sports clubs etc.

5. Debating clubs about relevant aspects of Olympism

- ethical values (e.g. fair play, internationalism, solidarity, all sport games, citius-altius-fortius)
- dangers (e.g. doping, instrumentalizing athletes, north-south-conflict, inequality of technical conditions)
- questions about Olympic Games

The Coubertin-Award has the inscription:

“voir loin, parler franc, agir ferme “, which means “see afar, speak frankly, act firmly”.

Those students, who have already achieved the Coubertin Award and have received the medal, report, that they since then feel obliged to this motto in the sense of an independent way of life.

Until today, the following Youth Forums took place:

1997 Le Havre (FRA)

100 participants gathered for one week, 10 students and 2 teachers from each school. At the same time the IPCC Congress “Coubertin – The Future of Olympism” took place and united Coubertin experts from 30 different countries.

The Youth Forum participants took part in venues of the Congress in Le Havre and visited Geoffrey de Navacelle de Coubertin in his castle in Mirville, which still is the ancestral seat of the Coubertin Family.

The IOC president Samaranch himself awarded the successful participants with the Coubertin-Award at the end of the Youth Forum.

1999 Much Wenlock (England)

Coubertin visited the Much Wenlock Olympian Games in 1890 and became considerably motivated for his idea of international Olympic Games by William Brookes. During his stay, Coubertin planted an oak there and by the end of the Youth Forum in 2005, the participating Coubertin schools received a cutting from that tree for their own school garden.

2001 Lausanne

The Lausanne Forum emphasised the topics Olympic History, the structure of the IOC and integrated the Olympic Museum as a teaching centre. For the first time 8 Australian students participated in this Youth Forum. They were the ones who won the national Coubertin-School-Award in one of the 8 Australian provinces, and as a reward for their achievements, were sent to Lausanne. This is a model, which could be adapted by other countries, too. Since then, the Australian students visit another European Coubertin School as their guests after the Youth Forum for another week (2001 Erfurt, 2003 Berlin, 2005 Tabor, 2007 Piešťany).

2003 Arenzano (Italy)

Africans participated in that Youth Forum for the first time. Arenzano concentrated on the topic of “Environment and Sport”. The unique “Environmental Education Center” in Arenzano offered a great variety of visual aids to support the aim. The topic of environmental protection was integrated as an Olympic value in the Olympic Charter in 1994.

2005 Radstadt (Austria)

Here the emphasis was put on “self confidence and self governance of young people through Olympism and Sport”. Radstadt has set a good example, as they integrated the whole school and the local community in the Youth Forum. IOC director Thomas Sithole was present and held two special sessions with the teachers about their Olympic education activities and experiences.

2007 Tabor (Czech Republic)

Tabor’s main subject will be “Olympism in school reality – think globally, act locally”.

The students live together in an international community for one week, they get to know and understand each other, and long-lasting friendships are built. They not only experience the host country’s culture, but also the daily school life at the hosting school.

The Pierre de Coubertin Forums are being evaluated systematically in each school and for the most part the results are then available for the whole Coubertin School Community in the form of lectures, articles or exhibitions.

Students of the Coubertin Boarding School Erfurt (GER) have created a Students’ Exhibition comprising 14 posters about work and life of Coubertin, as result of a one year school project in 2003. This exhibition has been translated in 17 different languages and is now available via internet: www.coubertin.net

Four Coubertin Schools together have written a Coubertin School Manual of 250 pages, which has been published in 6 different languages (English, German, Estonian, Polish, Slovakian and French). This school project lasted from 2004 to 2006 and was co-financed by the European Union’s Comenius Program. The manual should serve as an important aid for all new Coubertin Schools. This is also a good evidence to illustrate how the schools communicate and work together in projects beyond the Youth Forums.

Especially the network between the teachers turned out to be really effective and stable: the students leave school after their graduation but the teachers stay, they can involve Coubertin’s ideals in their lessons in all classes, and furthermore are able to fill their colleges with enthusiasm about Coubertin’s educational ideas.

Due to the internet, the participants of the Coubertin Youth Forums grew together to an international community. New friends visit each other still after years. We have our own internet domain now since September 2006 – name@coubertin-schools.edu – to strengthen the communicative network. Thus, all students of all Coubertin Schools have their own identity.

Payable to the willingness of the IOA presidents Dr. Filaretos and M. Kyriakou to cooperate, 10 teachers of Coubertin Schools were able to participate in the International Sessions for educationists in Olympia each time in 1999, 2003 and 2006. It was a valuable and important learning experience and a great motivation for them. The teachers were also warmly welcome by the school authorities in the Greek Coubertin School of Pirgos close to ancient Olympia.

Until today, 500 students from 17 Coubertin Schools located in 14 different countries took part in the Coubertin Youth Forums. The number of schools carrying the name Pierre de Coubertin rises each year. The IPCC is going to organize an Oceanic Coubertin Youth Forum in the near future on the recommendation of Australia.

In 2007, there will be – for the first time – a youth music festival for the Coubertin School Bands in Radstadt (AUT). Through this, the cultural aspect of Olympism will be accentuated, and students with musical talents will get the opportunity to experience a cultural exchange under the sign of the Olympic Rings. Drawing and art workshops are next on our schedule and are being talked about.

The Coubertin-Award has also been carried out during the International Olympic Youth Camp in 2000 in Sydney and in 2004 in Athens, and also during the “Francophone Games” in Québec (CAN) in 1999. This youth award can definitely be a good opportunity in the future for all Olympic oriented scholars.

It is the IPCC’s opinion that the Coubertin Youth Forums are a real enrichment and great challenge. The IPCC is confident about more countries creating Coubertin oriented schools or prizes for young people.

The IPCC wanted to proof the necessity and the possibility of bringing together young people who share the same idealistic ideas. Coubertin wrote in his “Olympic Memoirs”: “I put all my hopes in the youth”. In another place he demanded: “Olympism at school. It must be encouraged!”

Thank you very much for your attention!