



INTERNATIONAL  
OLYMPIC  
COMMITTEE

Thomas Bach  
President

## **Commemoration of the 100 anniversary of the Italian NOC**

**Rome, 9 June 2014**

**- Check against delivery –**

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It is fantastic to see so many friends of Italian sport here tonight from all around the world.

Italian athletes are rightly celebrated for their tough determination and competitive spirit.

The Italian team has competed in all but one of the modern Olympic Games, and Italian athletes have won more than 650 medals in total.

From a personal point of view I have perhaps more reason than many to be a fan.....it was against your tough Italian fencers that I won many of my important competitions and medals!

(But joking aside) over the years, in all those competitions I always found my Italian rivals to be not only single minded and determined, but when the contest was over, always great friends and companions. And for me, this is still a lasting legacy – the friendships I made are one of the reasons why I have such admiration for Italian sport.

In my sport of fencing Italians have produced some of the greatest champions - Eduardo Mangiarotti, won 13 Olympic medals, a feat that is still unrivalled.

But the names of Italian athletes from all sports summer and winter 'trip off the tongue'.

Let me perhaps single out one more name that symbolizes that great Italian combination of producing top competitors who nevertheless retain great humanity and warmth.

Eugenio Monti, with six Olympic medals in bobsleigh was an outstanding athlete but that was only one aspect. His help to his fellow competitors in the 1964 Innsbruck Games meant that he was awarded the first Pierre de Coubertin medal for sportsmanship.



Simply by naming the great athletes you have produced we can see the huge contribution you have made to world sport - but we all understand too that the Italians are also known worldwide as great organizers in sport.

For me my very first Olympic memories started here in Rome. I can clearly remember the Games of 1960 and some of the great champions it produced. But perhaps just as striking to me as a young boy was the powerful and impressive backdrop of this great city of yours.

Those Games confirmed not only that CONI and Italian sport are great organizers but also warm hosts.

At CONI you know how to combine the warmth and hospitality for which Italians are rightly famous with a clinical efficiency in organization. It is a formidable and winning combination. Indeed, CONI has become the benchmark for many many NOCs and sporting organizations around the world.

We have all learnt a lot from Italian sport organization and for this we must all be grateful.

Indeed for me personally I took many lessons from CONI which served as a great example when we were merging the German Sports Confederation and the German National Olympic Committee.

Therefore, I would like to congratulate and pay my respects not just to the President of CONI Giovanni Malago who is here but to all the Presidents in your illustrious history and the great legacy they have left.

And I continue to look to Italians for guidance in my current role as IOC President.

I am fortunate to have excellent Italian colleagues on the IOC — my friend, Ottavio Cinquanta; and two former CONI Presidents, Franco Carraro and Mario Pescante.

They have all of them contributed immensely to the development of the Olympic Movement. Not just by promoting the Olympic Values but also by nurturing and supporting the athletes who are at the centre of our movement.

I would also like to thank Manuela di Centa, winner of seven Olympic medals in cross country skiing;

And Italians provide the backbone of our sporting movement - some 12 of the Presidents of Sports Federations are Italians.

And then from the Olympic Sports themselves Ivo Ferriani, Ottavio Cinquanta, Francesco Ricci Bitti, Bruno Grandi and Carlo Croce.

I have already visited Italy more than once in my relatively short time as IOC President.



I came back today because I wanted to especially express my gratitude for CONI's outstanding contribution to the Olympic Movement.

CONI stands out in the Olympic Movement because it is an organisation that looks with pride on the past and with confidence toward the future.

That is also the spirit of Olympic Agenda 2020, and I will continue to rely on my Italian friends and colleagues to play an important role in shaping this important blueprint for the future of the Olympic Movement.

We have already had many important contributions and ideas and I am confident that by the end of the year we will see the Italian influence and imagination will be reflected in this crucial roadmap for the future.

For all these reasons, this is a very special day, a very emotional day and an opportunity to say thank you to CONI.

Thank you for the many very special Olympic moments that have made a backdrop to my life, from my childhood memories of the first Games in Rome, to my career as an athlete, to today with the support of my Italian friends and colleagues in the Olympic Movement.

Thank you for the support you have given to me and to the sporting movement.

On behalf of the Olympic Movement I would like to congratulate CONI and indeed Italy for the unique contribution you have made to the whole Olympic Movement worldwide.

Together we tonight celebrate 100 glorious years of hospitality, of passion of excellence. And perhaps together we might still see here in Rome one more chapter to be written in the Olympic story of this formidable organization.