

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Address
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of the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization
(Unesco)

at the presentation of the International
Fair Play Trophies for 1974

Paris, 6 June 1975

Mr. Chairman of the International Fair Play Committee,
Mr. President of the International Olympic Committee,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a very great pleasure for me to welcome you to this House for the first time since I took up my duties as Director-General of Unesco. I am particularly glad of the opportunity that this ceremony affords of expressing my warm gratitude and admiration to my friend, Jean Borotra, both for the tirelessly energetic work he has done and is doing as Chairman of the International Fair Play Committee and for all his activities on behalf of sport, particularly in his capacity as President-Delegate of the International Council of Sport and Physical Education.

I am also particularly happy that, for the first time in the history of the Fair Play Trophies, the President of the International Olympic Committee, Lord Killanin, together with Mrs. Monique Berlioux, the Committee's Director, should have honoured us with their presence, thus demonstrating the spirit of cordial co-operation which informs the Committee's relations with Unesco.

I would also extend a welcome to Mr. Jacques Perrilliat, Director of Sports in the French Secretariat of State for Youth and Sport, whose presence bears witness to the interest that the Government of our host country attaches to this event; and to the Permanent Delegates to Unesco and the diplomatic representatives of the countries whose nationals are about to receive a well-deserved tribute.

This year, once again, the International Fair Play Committee has made an extremely wise choice in its selection of those to whom the trophies and Diplomas of Merit are about to be awarded.

In presenting an award to the Swiss karate expert, Claude Ravonel, who wins one of the trophies for 1974, the Committee wished to accord recognition to a particularly praiseworthy act of sportsmanship. By his high-minded and courageous behaviour, the trophy-winner showed that, for the true sportsman, the quality and equity of the contest matter more than the winning of the title.

The second trophy is being awarded to Lia Manoliu, the Romanian discus thrower, who throughout an exceptionally distinguished career in sport has constantly shown an exemplary sense of fair play.

Three Diplomas of Merit are also being awarded. Two of these Diplomas go to the national football teams of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, in recognition of the high standard of conduct and scrupulous fairness shown when they played against each other in the 1974 World Cup Championship in Hamburg; whilst the other Diploma honours the irreproachable integrity which has marked the whole career of the British pentathlon champion, Jeremy Fox.

All these distinguished players and athletes - and we are particularly glad to see a woman among them since we are celebrating International Women's Year in 1975 - have received awards because they have, in various ways, displayed that moral excellence and that self-command in which sport finds its fullest justification and its highest meaning. Their behaviour, which shows us how much the practice of sport, considered from this point of view, can enhance and exalt the character, will be a shining example to all.

In addition, the awards being presented, some to individuals and some to teams, highlight the twofold purpose of sport. On the one hand, it should enable individuals to develop physically and morally and on the other, by developing the team spirit and fostering a willingness to sacrifice their individual interests to the common good, should help them to take their places in society and to serve it well.

The actions we are honouring today take on their fullest significance at a time when it is of particular importance to restore to sport that pristine ideal which Pierre de Coubertin sought to recapture across the intervening centuries. A champion, in fact, should not be the costly product of efforts directed to prestige-seeking or mercenary profit. He should, on the contrary, represent the culmination of disinterested endeavours aiming at individual or collective fulfilment. The consequence of the democratization to which so many countries aspire should be that the best emerge naturally from the general run of competitors, without being separated from them by any difference of nature, and are, as it were, supported by the mass of their fellows, whom they represent even whilst excelling them.

It is this conception of the champion, not as a "monstre sacré" nor as a remote hero but as the full achievement, directed by the will, of the potentialities of the human species, to which we are paying tribute here. Physical fulfilment is thus combined with the observance of a moral code which itself demands the use of intelligence in order to overcome obstacles successfully. The champion accordingly offers us the pattern of that balanced, harmonious development of the personality which is the ultimate aim of any scheme of education.

Regarded in this light, sport appears both as the finishing touch to a complete education and as an essential item in comprehensive, life-long education in democratic lines. Physical education and sport should, from the earliest years of schooling, be given their due place in the curriculum. It is important that children should, from their earliest years, be helped to appreciate their real physical being, and that their bodies should be trained and developed with a view to securing health, happiness, sympathy with nature and efficiency in action. And lastly every individual should be equipped, by the practice of sport, to ward off throughout his existence the world's encroachments on our physiological integrity.

Physical education and sport at school should therefore provide the basis for the continuing training and development of the body and the widespread practice of sport at different ages, in the spirit of the European Sport for all Charter, recently adopted in Brussels by 21 ministers of European countries and, of course, in line with the policy already being followed in certain countries. What now has to be done is to secure wider international acceptance of this idea and to introduce it into the day-to-day operation of educational systems.

With this in view, Unesco, in pursuance of a resolution adopted by the General Conference at its eighteenth session, is to convene a Conference of Ministers and senior officials responsible for physical education and sport at Unesco House from 5 to 10 April 1976. This Conference will consider the measures to be taken at the national level to see that these disciplines play the part they should in the upbringing of the young, both in and out of school. The Conference will also have to try to define policies and procedures for international co-operation, as a natural and essential feature in an area so well suited to fostering closer ties between nations. For physical education and sport, with their universal idiom, the ethical values they enshrine and their exemplification of a type of inter-personal relations founded on peaceful rivalry, with scrupulous fairness and mutual respect, can do much to advance international understanding and that friendship among the peoples of which our world stands more than ever in need.

I am happy to have this opportunity of thanking the International Council of Sport and Physical Education for the invaluable help it is giving the Secretariat in the preparations for this Conference and also of conveying my gratitude to the International Olympic Committee for the sympathetic interest it has shown in Unesco's undertakings.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thought it well to mention this international conference not only because it will mark a date in the development of Unesco's programme in education but also, and indeed mainly, because it is destined, I am sure, to provide the starting-point for a new policy with regard to physical education and sport in many Member States. And now, I do not wish any longer to delay the presentation to the prize-winners of the awards that they have so richly deserved. I shall conclude then, by telling them, on behalf of us all, that we are grateful to them for having, by their example, borne witness to those lofty virtues which, as in the case of the Olympic flame, the human race hands on from one generation to another like a torch of hope.