

Declaration

Joint Organization of the Olympic Games and the Paralympics



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The vision

Sir Ludwig Guttman's vision continues to inspire all of us who try to completely integrate disabled persons into society.

We turn our gaze on difference, on those citizens who though frequently fall victims to injustice and social exclusion they yet possess the stamina to send this message to the world; that of will power and inner strength of soul.

Time has come for human consideration, for understanding of every society's and every state's obligation towards fellow-citizens with disabilities.

The bell has tolled for us to **change**:

We demand equal social participation in place of rejection and 'philanthropic' isolation,

From 'patients' we transform into asserting our right to difference and self-determination,

From carrying the stigma of dependency into asking for our complete social and work integration by the promotion of supportive measures,

From the economic and social planning for the few, we ask for the design of an open and participative society for the many.

Change of attitude

"Change in society's attitude, a necessary prerequisite"

The legislation by itself is proven to be powerless without the creation of a sensitive and educated society, which will be in position to support the legal framework, to comprehend the rights and the needs of disabled persons and to struggle against existing prejudices and the stigma associated with them.

Our goals:

Equal opportunities education of students with disabilities.

Upgrading information concerning the various forms of disability.

Understanding of the multiple forms of discrimination, disabled persons are exposed to.

Support of measures conducive to the promotion of equal

opportunities for the disabled.

Promotion of experience exchange, concerning effective implementation strategies.

Reinforcement of cooperation between interested parties.

Complete enactment of their rights.

Paralympics

The establishment of Paralympics was a big step forward, as they constitute a necessary evolution of the Olympic Games, given the development of contemporary humanitarian ideals. It is the transition from the apparent and able-bodied physical strength to the one motivated by the unobservable psychic will, the power of the soul.

The word "Paralympics" is a compound word consisting of the Greek preposition "para" meaning (i) 'next to', (ii) 'side by side', and the adjective "Olympic" meaning the one related to the Olympic Games. Therefore, the word states that the Paralympics are parallel Olympic Games for disabled persons. Their practical philosophy is based on the athletic rules governing the Olympic sports with the least possible deviations adopted due to the physical condition of the contestants. Their message is equivalent to that of the Olympic Games, but it is something more. Paralympics constitute the ultimate symbol of humane sensitivity, solidarity and courage called upon to face life's fundamental hardship, namely bodily disability.

Paralympics' athletes are distinctly special, because, thanks to their gigantic will, they have overcome adversity looming as insurmountable to most of us.

En mass participation of athletes and spectators in the Paralympics bears a significant impact upon the global family of disabled persons. It affirms the universal principles and moral values that regulate athletics, such as respect in diversity, faith in friendship and solidarity, harmonic coexistence within a multicultural environment, joy of participation.

Once more, athletics help to smooth out our viewpoint with respect to what it is assumed as a difference and assist in bringing us close together. It renders obvious that disability is not a hindrance to personality development,

to the achievement of personal goals, to social participation. Simultaneously, we hope that athletics may offer an opportunity to draw the lights on the problems that disabled persons face. The message is multi-faceted. Despite the special difficulties that his/her disability causes, the disabled person has the inner strength not only to overcome them, but also to assert in equal terms his/her social integration and participation to each and every activity.

«We sweat every day,
live every moment,
curve a new path
facing the challenge
in attempting to find strength.
Having the promise as our guide
that we will get out of the darkness,
we share the vision,
The vision that uplifts us
and we create friendships,
friendships tested through fire.
Having spirit as our guide, we came here together!

The big step

For all those who believe in the Olympic ideal, but also for all those who fight for human rights, a big question arises concerning the organization of the Paralympics. Why “side by side” to the Olympic Games and not together? Why once more the disabled, separately? Is it not the moment for the new big leap forward for the Games?

It is clear that the disabled persons’ problems do not mainly derive from their mental or physical condition, but from the social reaction towards them.

Why, separately, for once more?

Social participation is won on a daily basis. Equal opportunities are established legally. The right to self-determination becomes a flag for the Movement of Disabled Persons.

Nevertheless, in everyday life, no law and no legislation can ensure the rights of the disabled, if all of us do not proceed TOGETHER and if we do not

accept their role in everyday life.

For more than a century now, the Olympic Movement has listened to social demands; sex discrimination, racism, Women's movement, Disabled Persons' Movement. It is about time to respond to the new social challenge. The conditions are mature now than ever before for the simultaneous organization of the Olympic Games and the Paralympics.

Social Hypocrisy

Undoubtedly, we expect reactions to such a proposal; reactions stemming from financial interests and exigency. Whoever is socially aware, even partially, feels the well-hidden hypocrisy, the clear-cut racism. Extreme commercialization of the Games does not leave space for such an innovative proposal. Entrepreneurial interests infest the Games. The thirst for victory is not usually accompanied by pure motives. Conglomerates have invested in the new social ideal and no-one can hinder their aims. The able-bodied and good-looking ones are readily accepted by a society that places superfluous importance on image and looks ... The handicapped? The sight of a handicapped still annoys many people...

The hidden side of the Paralympics is that of the lack of athletic infrastructure and of en mass participation; it is the non-existent support to the disabled athletes in their strenuous efforts. In Paralympics, as in the Olympic Games, the aim is one and clear; the hyper-production of champions and the highest possible medallion concentration. We crave for more medals, no matter what the cost! The Olympic ideal cannot be contained by such a hyper-production of champions, athletic records' hunting and the employment of doping practices, which unfortunately are not absent from the Paralympics either.

For those wishing to put an end to this hypocrisy prevalent into modern society, the young generation may be their only hope. How will the new generation of athletes and spectators become accustomed to these ideals, if it does not watch disabled and able-bodied athletes to enter the stadium together and contest in parallel? How otherwise, unless it realizes that the efforts and the sacrifices undertaken are the same for all? The smile on the

athletes' faces is one and the same. The joy of victory, but also of participation is the same.

We believe that by asking for a joint organization of the Olympic Games and the Paralympics, we knock down the last trench of discrimination in the Olympic Movement. Let's dare to take this big step and we feel sure that the image "engraved" on our children's souls will be the beginning of a new social reality, where no one will need to claim the acceptance of his/her diversity; he/she will simply live his/her life the way he/she desires.