

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

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

at the ceremony for the presentation of the
1989 Pierre du Coubertin International Fair Play Trophies

UNESCO, 5 November 1990

Mr President of the International Fair Play Committee,
Your Excellency,
Madam President of the Czechoslovak National Olympic Committee,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,

The prize-winners in whose honour we are gathered here today are a symbol of hope, that very same hope that brings to life the principles of UNESCO's International Charter of Physical Education and Sport. Ms Vera Caslavská (Czechoslovakia), who has behaved with exemplary dignity throughout her sporting career, Ms Chris Evert (United States), whose skill and modesty are so outstanding, the ever-courteous Mr Ken Rosewall (Australia), Mr Pirmin Zurbriggen (Switzerland), who was held up as an example once before in International Youth Year in 1985, and Mr Jean-Michel Henry (France), whose sense of sportsmanship is so remarkable, all symbolize, in their way, a code of conduct inspired by the lofty moral values inherent in high-level competitive sport. Alongside, and sometimes at the opposite extreme to pecuniary considerations, which seem all too often to be the only ones which prevail, there are values such as dignity, generosity and fairness, or in other words, fair play. Actions that bespeak such qualities are infrequent and thus all the more admirable.

At its seventh session, which has just drawn to a close in Ottawa, the Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport once again stressed the need to promote the ethical and moral values of sport, in particular by taking effective measures to combat doping and the harmful influences threatening sport, such as violence or exclusively commercial considerations. It also emphasized the need for an overall view of sport which would stress its educational dimension.

As stated in Recommendation 6 adopted by the second International Conference of Ministers Responsible for Physical Education and Sport, and in the words of the Declaration recently adopted in Ottawa by the Committee, 'more than ever, it is important for sport at this level to be protected from the array of dangers confronting it, including violence, doping and excessive commercialization'.

Distinguished Prize-winners,

You have reaffirmed your resolve to safeguard the ethical values of sport, and through you we express our gratitude to all those, the world over, who assist us by what they do. Thanks to you, honour and moral dignity will remain exemplary values for the increasing number of young people who aspire to practise a sport. There is no doubt that an honourable defeat is more praiseworthy than victory at any price, the most important thing being to uphold and participate in the ethics of fair play.

May I conclude with a general comment. Despite our wishes, the gap between North and South is also widening in terms of physical education and sport, and yet the durability of the ceremony that brings us together each year in this place seems to me to be an encouraging sign. It is gratifying to note that it testifies to the joint desire of the International Fair Play Committee and UNESCO to enhance and promote the spirit of fair play through the force of example.