

19 June 2004

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Julian Robert Hunte,  
President of the 58th Session of the General Assembly,  
at the United Nations Athens 2004 Olympic Torch Relay Event**

When the world converges on Athens in August of this year, we will be continuing our celebration of a most unique event in the history of humankind - the Olympic Games. For this brief period, a world vision will inspire us all. Differences among nations will not matter as much. Rich, lifelong friendships and memories will be made. And an adventure will begin that will give to many, particularly our young people, an invaluable opportunity to listen, to learn, to understand, and to grow.

Our world is well served by the Olympic Games, the Olympic Ideals and the Olympic Truce - a time-out from violence, conflict and war that I urge all to take. For when we do so, we allow ourselves to stop and contemplate our world, not as it is, but as it ought to be - a global village fully in accord with the goals and objectives of the United Nations Charter.

There is a place for national pride, as there is for individual accomplishment at the Olympic Games. But there is also a place for cooperation and accord across nations that is embodied in the collective resolve to uphold the Olympic ideals, to reach for the highest athletic and ethical standards, to build bridges across divides of language and culture, and to create effective networks through which we may celebrate the rich diversity of our world.

The message of the Olympics Games for all of us, then, is clear. Our countries may differ and our perspectives may differ. But we all appreciate the importance of sport, especially for the growth and development of young people of sterling character, in whose hands we must entrust the future of the United Nations, and indeed of our world. The message is also that we must recognize and respect the talent, skills and dedication that the Olympics embody, and which engage us in celebration of the accomplishments of women and men and of nations large and small, even as we pay tribute to the indefatigable human spirit that bring so many competitors to the Olympics.

The Olympic flame is a most compelling symbol of the Olympics Games. I believe it fitting that, on a journey that takes it around the globe on its way to Athens, the Torch bearing that flame should come to this United Nations - the organization to which consideration of the affairs of the world has been entrusted. It is indeed my pleasure, as President of the United Nations General Assembly to participate in this historic event.

It is my hope that when history writes the account of the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, it will once again reaffirm that the prize for excellence and commitment is so much more than winning.

Indeed, the prize is that we would have done our very best, and that the spirit of the Games, of friendship and tolerance would have spurred us to celebrate all that is good in people and nations - to celebrate life. It is that so many would leave Athens powerfully inspired to play their part in meeting critical global challenges in the interest not only of our countries, but of the peoples of the world.

To the Government and People of Greece, the host of the 2004 Olympics, I extend my sincere congratulations and good wishes for a successful and enriching Olympic Games.

I thank you.