

[Speech delivered by Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro Ruz, first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and President of the Councils of State and Ministers AT a meeting with MEMBERS of the delegation that TOOK PART IN the Pan American Games in Winnipeg with supplementary comments and figures added by HIM. August 13, 1999 \[1\]](#)

**Date:**

13/08/1999

Dear athletes;

Dear comrades from the Olympic Committee and INDER;

Dear guests,

This is a small event in terms of the number of people present but it is of great significance. It is not so because you wanted to honor me on my birthday but because you are giving me the opportunity to thank you for this friendly, fraternal and affectionate gesture.

As you know, throughout my life as a revolutionary, for over two thirds of my lifetime and especially after the victory that took us to the leadership of the country, I have never celebrated my birthday publicly.

This time I was told that our athletes wanted to invite me to an unpretending ceremony. I saw it as a chance to express to you once again my great admiration for the feats you have achieved in following the revolutionary sporting traditions initiated just over 40 years ago. In particular, it provided me with the opportunity to address an issue that I consider terribly important: not our past and present athletic glories, but rather our future glories.

The events of the recent past, those that have just taken place at the Pan American Games, have been extensively and brilliantly discussed by a group of comrades on our television networks. I will not say a word about what happened in Winnipeg; I would prefer instead to address three announcements made at the round table on Wednesday. I will refer very briefly to two of them and discuss the third at greater length.

The comrades there made three announcements. Héctor, the program moderator, mentioned some comments I had made to him in a previous conversation. I told him how painful it was for us that at the most exciting moments in these games --moments of great patriotic passion, of tremendous interest, in the time-outs requested in each match or between innings-- the viewers' attention was interrupted by commercial advertising, in the style so purely typical of capitalism and consumer society. This is the result of the extremely difficult situation we have had to endure in the worst years of the special period.

At a time, if we had not sought funds through advertising it would have not been possible to broadcast these sporting events which, as you know, are followed by millions of people in our country. During

these past especially important, difficult and challenging competitions such commercials were more painful than ever, coming precisely at a time when we were suffering in Winnipeg the most disappointing consequences of the commercialization of something as pure as sports. Never again, said I, would there be commercial advertising during the broadcasting of sport competitions. Instead, these spare minutes should be used for explanations and comments on the events, and on the athletes' performance and merits. Such information as will further enrich our people considerable sports culture.

Secondly, comrade Humberto, chairman of the National Institute of Physical Education and Sports [INDER] announced that Cuba would immediately set out to create a laboratory. It would bolster our sports and help defend our country from any traps, dirty tricks or underhanded stunts staged at increasingly commercial competitions. This laboratory will also help safeguard our athletes' and our homeland's honor, even in the event that one of our athletes or coach made the mistake of seeking an advantage by using some sort of anabolic substance, something absolutely incompatible with our athletes' dignity, honor and courage, qualities which have won us a great many medals.

A good laboratory would protect us from any such circumstances while providing support to our sister nations in the Caribbean and Central and South America, which do not have the laboratories required to detect such substances and are thus forced to seek these services from highly developed countries and pay extremely high prices for any tests. Except for the Pan American Games when we rented some equipment to this end we do not have such laboratories and also need to have tests carried out abroad.

The creation of this laboratory will not require major expenses because the basic factors are the technicians and scientists, and we have a very large number with the highest qualification. The laboratory equipment will be very modern to help us save on the expenditures we currently need to make. The cost of the equipment will be gradually recovered through the services given to other countries, at minimal prices, much lower than those charged by the laboratories of the highly developed and wealthy nations.

Those nations may have huge financial resources but we have in our country extraordinary human capital and the scientists, honesty and prestige necessary to be fully reliable. This is even more important than recovering the cost of establishing the laboratory, a rather modest cost despite the high quality of the equipment. We will be protected from both dirty tricks and errors. One who fails somewhat stains the glories and merits of all the rest and serves as ammunition for infamous and loathsome slander.

The third issue I want to address --one on which I will talk a bit more extensively-- is the news released that same Wednesday toward the end of the broadcast by comrade Fernández, chairman of the Olympic Committee. He stated that our country will begin the battle to host the Olympics some day, a battle that will begin right now with our sights set on the year 2008, given that Athens has already been chosen for the 2004 games.

We have no complaints whatsoever about this decision because it was there that the history of the Olympic Games began over 20 centuries ago. That is where the games were born. We thought that on the centennial of the Olympics revival in 1896 it would have been proper to make Athens the host of the games, that is, if a bit of dignity, honor and justice prevailed in the world. Instead, the games were held in the city of Atlanta, in a wealthy, powerful country where television broadcasts and advertising could produce more funds and resources. Therefore, the same country was chosen for the fourth time this century and Athens was pushed aside until it has finally seen justice done.

We trust that even in this world so full of injustices, morality and reason will finally succeed. That is why we applaud the selection of Athens as host and we will attend that competition with our best athletes, increasingly better trained, to fight for a place of honor there. Later will come the 2008 Olympics. As I said, the battle must begin right now! In fact, it began the day we announced our legitimate aspiration. That does not mean that it will be easy for us to see justice done in 2008, that is, for morality and reason to triumph that day. But if we do not achieve our goal in 2008, we will achieve it in 2012, and I

do not think it will happen later than the year 2016, if we fight well and keep up the effort. We could almost say that is the maximum time limit for achieving our goal.

I wanted to explain a few things so that you and our people understand what it means to fight for the Olympics, a battle that is beginning now, and which will initially be aimed at hosting the 2008 games.

What is the rationale behind this request now although no formal procedures have been undertaken yet to host the Olympics? I will explain our reasons and I do not think that anyone, within or outside the country, anyone in the world, could refute our claims and our right.

To begin with, I will say that neither in the first or the second half of this century nor at any other time in history has a country done or achieved as much in sports as Cuba in an extremely short period of time. And it is a small Third World country, one that is additionally subjected to an economic blockade by the wealthiest and mightiest nation on Earth as well as to a thousand different forms of harassment and aggression.

Professional sport was removed and it also ceased to be the exclusive privilege of an elite minority to become every person's right. That right to practice sports and to compete with dignity and prestige in the international arena we have heroically defended. This was particularly true when the U.S. government arbitrarily denied visas to participate in a Central American and Caribbean competition hosted by the colonized neighboring sister nation of Puerto Rico. On that occasion, we consecrated this right with our courage, adding a new page of honor and glory to our history.

Physical education and sports have been massively promoted unlike anywhere else in the world. It reaches all children, of all ages, in all of the country's schools; all the youth, all workers, all of the people. Those who do not practice sports on a regular basis can fully enjoy them as an exciting, popular and healthy display.

The limited number of pages in our newspapers do not provide enough room to describe, for example, the hundreds of baseball teams created by our sugar industry workers and their ongoing competitions in every factory of our primary agricultural industry; and this is just one sector and one sport.

Today, Cuba is one of the few countries in the world, among those with a certain development in this area, where sports are neither commercial nor professional.

Cuba has never competed with foreign athletes in its teams; it has always competed with its own athletes, without a single exception, throughout 40 years.

Cuba has never stolen a single athlete or sports talent. On the contrary, we have trained coach and athletes who have gone on to compete for their own countries. I remember, among others, a young Puerto Rican boxer who dearly loved Cuba. He earned a bachelor's degree in physical education and sports here. He was a good boxer but upon completing his studies he returned to his native land to compete in his country's team, as it was his duty to do.

During the many international competitions held here in Cuba, in a wide range of disciplines, not a single visiting athlete, delegation member or journalist has ever been physically assaulted. On the contrary, they have been welcomed with every consideration and absolute respect. Nor has a single athlete or delegation member been morally assaulted or made the target of insults.

A good example is that hundreds of U.S. athletes, our greatest sports rivals, participated in the 1991 Pan American Games held here and absolutely no one can relate a single insult or offense, despite our political and ideological differences and the terrible damages inflicted by the United States. We are reasonable people with a highly developed consciousness and revolutionary culture, not a nation of blind political bigots. It is a source of pride for our homeland and our Revolution that not a single offensive word against a visiting athlete or delegation has ever been spoken by the people in our

country.

Our press has never insulted or slandered an athlete from the United States or any other country. On many occasions, I have gone to greet an American volleyball, boxing or baseball team competing at the Ciudad Deportiva or some other facility and I have conversed with and even congratulated outstanding athletes from that country.

Any athlete of any nationality can feel absolutely undisturbed, relaxed and safe in our country, fearless of any shameful incident such as the one that took place during the game that would give us the glory of many years of consecutive victories in one of the sports that is most emblematic and exciting for our people, for it is not only our national sport but also a source of recreation and entertainment throughout close to six months every year.

I am talking of baseball and the decisive match between the Cuban and Canadian teams at the last Pan American Games, just held in Winnipeg, particularly, the moments after the 25th out. You all know that if a match is in the final inning and the 25th out falls when the score is 5 to 1 in favor of a team with an incredibly high morale and a pitcher in full command, at his physical and psychological peak, there is not the slightest hope for the opponent. The 26th and 27th outs will follow immediately and then the announcement; "The game is over!"

Our sports commentators can even make that announcement a few seconds before the easy grounder or the high fly reaches the shortstop, the second baseman or the fielder. "It's a high fly; he's waiting for it...this is all!" That is how confident they are. And I do not remember any fly ball falling during the 27th out. What happened there? At that precise moment a deliberately fabricated and tolerated shameless provocation, which seriously affected the pitcher, the catcher and other key players.

On our television we could not see what was happening because we were broadcasting the host country's coverage and they did not show a single shot of the incident. Our television networks could only broadcast that particular moment later thanks to our reporters who were there filming the game with their own cameras. None of it appeared on our television screens while it was happening, so we did not know when the individual responsible for the provocation entered the field, how far he went or what happened. All we knew was that the game was stopped. Our commentators were describing it but we could not see anything. It was only later, thanks to the fact that our own television cameras had filmed what was going on, that the public in Cuba could find out what had happened there.

The incident affected the whole team, distracting them from the game, breaking their concentration. The catcher, who plays such an important role, had to go out defend his country's honor and flag in response to that vulgar provocation, as did the second baseman and all the others. The pitcher, who was preparing to make the 26th and 27th outs, had to wait 20 minutes or longer; who knows exactly how long before the incident was over.

Under heavy pressure from the Canadian team manager, the umpires were close to suspending our team, stealing our victory, while the public --mostly decent Canadians-- took our side, annoyed by this despicable provocation.

This is how a player arrived safe at first base during that decisive match. By losing the game, we would lose first place and also the chance to compete in Sydney. For that reason, it would have been worse to lose the second-to-last game than the last one. If we had lost the last game, we would still be one of the teams competing in this sport at the Olympics, although we would never get over losing it. (APPLAUSE)

The pitcher who had been doing an extraordinary job up until that point had to be replaced. In the end, the glory was all the greater because in spite of what had happened, along came the 26th and 27th outs, and we could have even thrown in a few more outs, 29 in all, and they would have never made it to second base, much less home. We know it very well.

Something like this could never happen in our country. There has not been a single incident like that in the 40 years of our sports history. Respect and maximum consideration for athletes, for their physical and moral integrity are an essential part of our finest sporting traditions. That speaks volumes about our country and our people who are capable of bravely combating any injustice or aggression against our sporting rights and capable of paying tribute to the merits of rival athletes and applauding them. That is, they are capable of showing the highest respect possible to any visiting athlete.

Cuba has developed a genuine and healthy sports culture. It is unlikely that any other nation has reached the same level, especially when sports have been prostituted and commercialized disregarding their role in promoting the people's health and well-being.

As you are aware, our people know everything there is to know about sports. This is showed by the groups of people who gather together to discuss and argue about every possible strategy in baseball, boxing, volleyball and just about every other sport known to humankind. This is a reality we are all aware of, the fruit of a great sporting culture and passion. The fans know the rules better than we do.

Throughout 40 years, our athletes have set a beautiful example of indifference to material wealth. They live modestly, unpretentiously and value the people's affection and admiration above all else. In recognition of their merits, their values, the services they render our country, the satisfactions they give it and the glories they contribute we are considering, in fact, already beginning to implement a policy of greater care for sports and particularly for athletes.

One day it occurred to me to ask how much money is collected at the baseball stadiums. You all know that the admission paid are a pure formality; a Cuban peso when changed at one of our exchange bureaus is the equivalent to five cents of a US dollar. I asked how many pesos we take in and I realized that the net earnings, based on what we charge -I thought we might even raise the price a little bit but by raising it a bit, up to 20 or 50 more cents, or rather, the equivalent of 7.5 cents of a US dollar according to the exchange rate- were not sufficient to improve as much as they deserve the lives of our baseball players who regularly participate in the national series.

And, of course, we do not make distinctions; if we improve the lives of athletes in one sport, we have to make the same improvements for all the others because that is the sense of justice that should reign in our country.

We must include them all: those who run, jump, practice archery or participate individually or as part of a team in any sport, whether or not it is as popular or widely followed as others because they are all athletes who make sacrifices, train rigorously and give their best for our country. The country will always provide equal treatment when trying to improve its athletes living standards without distinctions between one sport and another. But we understand and are very much aware, and increasingly so, that the country must do more for its athletes, therefore, we have already begun to apply this policy.

I have enumerated quite a few reasons, but there are others perhaps even more compelling.

Throughout the last 40 years, over 50,000 technicians and physical education and sports instructors have graduated in our country and today there are 32,514 technicians and specialists actively working in this field. No other country has such a high number, or even comes close to Cuba, in relation to the total population: 2932 technicians and specialists to one million people. We are by far the country with the highest number of technicians, instructors, professors and other physical education and sports specialists per capita in the world: one to 341 people. We would have to see who follows second in this type of Olympic competition and see exactly its ratio. I do not think the United States comes close to the figure of 800,630 specialists in this field, which is what they would need to match Cuba in this regard.

In the very wealthy countries, there are private instructors who teach and train wealthy individuals, not the poor, of course. The 32,514 technicians and specialists in Cuba --most of whom are young university graduates from the Higher Institute of Physical Education-- are found in every corner of the country, at

the service of all of the people from the moment they enter primary school.

As you know, Cuba has an exceptional school games system that culminates in a major national competition, which constitutes an endless source of highly qualified athletes. I am not aware of any other country with a similarly comprehensive system. We have sports initiation schools in every province where basic general education is combined with the intensive practice of sports, in a wide variety of disciplines.

There are also intermediate and higher education centers with young high-performance athletes who contribute to the generalization of physical education and sports among children and young people and to the formation of youth and national teams whose quality is measured in international competitions. Some activities in this field are so beautiful that they can be considered first class sports and art.

The athletes training system in our country is absolutely free of charge and massive because there is no charge for either basic general education or physical education and sports training, which contributes greatly to building character in our children and youth. Sports require discipline, and they teach children and young people a great deal about discipline, resistance, stability, perseverance and courage. They help build character and promote better health and physical and mental development.

In our country, any particularly outstanding athlete in certain sports can have a coach to him or herself. Imagine how much it would cost in the United States or any other developed country to have a coach dedicated to training one outstanding athlete. Also, what it would cost the athlete, his or her family, or any young person who wanted to play tennis well, or be a good gymnast, or practice the high jump or long jump, fencing, weightlifting or any other individual sport that requires specialized and ongoing instruction. The cost would certainly be no less than 50,000 US dollars a year.

You would need to use a computer to do the actual calculations and measure in dollars what it would cost in these countries the work done by our 32,514 physical education and sports technicians and instructors. This is an additional moral reason to support our country judging by what Cuba has achieved with no other resources than the determination, sacrifice and talent of its sons and daughters.

Moreover, we have provided trainers not only to our athletes but also to athletes from other countries. Based on rough calculations --in this case I have not had access to the exact figures-- using only general estimates and taking into account the number of Cuban coach cooperating with other countries, we could state that no other country cooperates more than Cuba with the development of sports in the Third World.

For example, only in the first half of the year hundreds of Cuban technicians cooperated in training many athletes for the Pan American Games in Winnipeg, where we would be competing too. During the six months involved, a total of 733 Cuban specialists worked in 42 countries in the Caribbean, Central and South America, and other continents; 39 of the 42 are Third World countries, while only three developed countries had a number of Cuban technicians working for them. Over 600 of these specialists were providing their services within this hemisphere, working with athletes who competed against us in Winnipeg.

You were even able to see --and Sagarra knows this very well-- how Sarbelio, one of our best coach working there with great integrity and a sense of honor took two gold medals from us in boxing, fair and square.

The two Argentinean boxers, who are clearly very good athletes, defeated two of our boxers in the semi-finals and went on to win in the finals. Their coach is one of the most admired, prestigious and experienced Cuban technicians. This is what we expect from our specialists cooperating with other countries.

At the last Central American and Caribbean Games held in Venezuela last year --these are events where

Cuba predominates by a wide margin-- athletes from other countries trained by Cuban instructors obtained 17 gold medals. At the Pan American Games in Winnipeg, 45 Cuban specialists participated with athletes from other countries who won 26 medals, including eight gold medals and numerous high positions at these extremely tough competitions, in which the United States, Cuba and Canada participated with strong teams. When we lose medals, in any sport, to athletes from Latin America, Central America, the Caribbean or elsewhere in the Third World we have to feel rewarded because this is proof of the dignity, honor, dedication and integrity of our sports specialists. We could ask ourselves how many specialists were sent to these countries by two immensely developed and wealthy nations, the United States and Canada, to train athletes who would then compete against their own, and how much this cooperation would have cost if provided.

Many things do honor our country in sports. A few minutes ago, I asked Erick when he had started out in gymnastics and he said: "In grammar school, when I was six." Only a young athlete who began to practice sports at six years of age could win five gold medals like he did, in spite of the fact that he was not even planning to compete because a lymphatic inflammatory process that seemed to have been cured had begun to flare up as he was traveling for the competitions.

When I asked him how he managed to work things out, he said that they treated him again with antibiotics and he got better. Up until almost the last minute, he thought he would not be able to compete and would only be there to cheer his teammates on.

Look at what an honorable athlete he is: I did not see the competition myself but I had heard that the judges had favored a Georgian competitor representing Canada; a number of people said so. And I asked Erick, "Erick, what was this competition like? Was it clean?" And he said, "Yes, it was clean. The Georgian won on the horizontal bars and was ahead of the rest, perhaps not by as many points as they gave him but he won this medal fair and square." This is a genuine example of an honest athlete. My doubts were cleared up and I was really pleased. I would have liked for him to win the six gold medals but with five golden and one silver medal he is the athlete who won most gold medals at the games.

This year it is quite possible that Cuba will once again reach the figure of more than a thousand sports specialists cooperating abroad, like in 1998. Many countries are preparing for the Olympics.

The examples given of our sports trainers' work raise their prestige tremendously. I should add that in just seven years, from 1992 to 1999, over 5000 Cuban technicians and specialists have provided their services and helped in the development of sports in dozens and dozens of so-called emerging countries. I do not know if any other country can say as much. Our technicians have contributed to the development of sports worldwide, mostly where the people do not have the economic resources needed and, except in very exceptional cases, cooperating fundamentally with Third World countries.

And what have the results been in our own country of the work done in sports throughout these years? I have a sheet of paper here with figures on the Olympic Games, the main issue I am addressing today and the object of our request.

Listen to this:

In the century coming to an end next year -from the year 1900 to the year 2000- the Olympics have only been cancelled on three occasions: once in 1916, due to World War I and twice later, in 1940 and 1944, during World War II. In both cases, the games were resumed two or three years after the war. Including the next games in Sydney, the Olympics will have been held a total of 23 times throughout these 100 years.

France has hosted them twice, in 1900 and 1924; the United States four times, in 1904, 1932, 1984 and 1996; the United Kingdom has played host twice, in 1908 and 1948; Sweden, once, in 1912; Belgium, in 1920; the Netherlands, in 1928; Germany, twice, in 1936 and 1972; Finland, in 1952; Australia, twice, in 1956 and 2000; Italy, in 1960; Japan, in 1964; Mexico, in 1968; Canada, in 1976; the Soviet Union, in

1980; South Korea, in 1988; and Spain, in 1992.

As you can see, in the second half of this century as sports became increasingly commercial and amateur sports were being abandoned, in the course of just 12 years between 1984 and 1996, the Olympic Games were granted on almost two consecutive occasions to the United States.

You know what these competitions are like. If the games are held in Tokyo, the schedules have to be reconciled with the time zones in the United States to ensure greater advertising revenues. In the most popular competitions, the times that prevail are those most convenient for the U.S. public, no matter what country is the host. We, of course, would not have to deal with this problem because we are in more or less the same time zone.

The total number: 23 Olympic Games in this century, including the one in the year 1900. Well, 13 of these 23 Olympics were held in Europe, that is, 56.5% of the total; 5 in the United States and Canada, for a 21.7%; four in the most highly developed and wealthiest countries of Asia and Oceania; twice, including next year, in Australia; once in Japan and once in South Korea; that is, 17.3% of the total. Then, on only one of these 23 occasions, the Olympics were hosted by a Latin American country counted among those with the greatest wealth and economic and industrial development in the region, namely Mexico, in 1968, accounting for 4.3% of the total number of games. We were very pleased with the choice of Mexico not only because it is an Ibero-American country but also because of its traditional policy of friendship with Cuba in the face of the general hostility against our country that the United States managed to promote from Mexico's south border down to the Patagonia.

Altogether, Europe, the United States and Canada have been the hosts of 78.2% of the Olympic Games held this century. And adding the games held in the wealthiest countries of Asia and Oceania you end up with a total of 95.6% of the games held. The aforementioned Latin American country accounts for the remaining percentage. That shows all the "justice" that can be found in this world.

Here is the other side of the coin: the Caribbean and Central and South America with a 403.7 million population --according to official statistics from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, from December of 1998-- have never hosted the Olympic Games. Africa, with a 778.5 million population has never hosted the Olympic Games. China, with 1,255 million people has never hosted the Olympic Games. A group of formerly Asian colonies that are now striving and struggling for economic and social development, with a total of 3,398 million people have never hosted the Olympic Games.

Sixteen of the world's wealthiest countries with a total population of 1,073.7 million have hosted 100% of the 23 Olympic Games held this century. Mexico is an exception because it is in the 15th place worldwide in economic terms but its large population reduces its per capita earnings. Meanwhile, the Third World as a whole, with a 4,718 million population or 4.4 times more than those 16 countries has hosted 0% of these games. None of the Third World countries has ever been given this right.

Further expanding on this point, and viewing it from yet another angle, hosting the Olympic Games has been throughout this century the exclusive privilege of the most developed and wealthy countries. The majority of these are members of the OECD, an institution that groups the countries with the greatest wealth and development in the world. The only exception to this is the Soviet Union, which although not a member of the OECD it was a highly developed and immensely wealthy power when Moscow hosted the Olympics in 1980.

Five of the wealthiest OECD nations --the United States, Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Australia-- with a combined population of 491.5 million people, that is, 8.3% of the world's have hosted 12 Olympic Games for a 52.2% of the games held this century.

Among these wealthy OECD member countries, the Group of Seven or the wealthiest of all, which together account for almost 70% of the world Gross Domestic Product, have been especially privileged when it comes to hosting the Olympics. You will recall that, in ascending order, Italy has been the host



once; Japan, once; Canada, once; France, twice; the United Kingdom, twice; Germany, twice; and the United States, four times. In other words, this group of only seven countries, the wealthiest in Europe, North America and Asia, were selected to host the games 13 times.

Who decides upon the Olympic venue? The International Olympic Committee or IOC makes the decision. Is every country a member of the IOC? No! Not a single country is a member of the IOC.

Based on its own criteria and absolute free will, the IOC appoints a certain number of people to represent it before the National Olympic Committees. There are currently 104 members in all. These individuals have a vote in the IOC from the moment they are appointed and join this committee. They do not represent the National Olympic Committees, nor do they represent countries within the IOC; rather, they represent the IOC within countries and before the National Olympic Committees.

There is not an IOC representative in every country. On the contrary, the majority of countries have no IOC representatives. There are, on the other hand, quite a few cases of countries with two or even more IOC representatives. Naturally, these are the countries with the greatest influence on the decisions made by this institution. For example, those countries that have hosted the Olympics have two and sometimes three representatives in the IOC that take part as full members in the fundamental decisions.

We have already discussed the exceptional privileges enjoyed by the most highly developed and wealthiest countries in the International Olympic Movement. The vast majority of the world's other countries have no IOC representatives, nor any possibility of conveying their opinions, points of view and interests to the IOC through IOC representatives. These representatives are usually outstanding citizens who are either associated with or lovers of sports in the country where they serve as representatives.

On the other hand, the countries with the greatest influence in the IOC coordinate their positions and draw up common policies.

The current situation is as follows: there are 200 National Olympic Committees and only 79 have representatives who are IOC members. Of these, 21 have two or three representatives on this committee and thus control a greater number of votes. The other 58 have single representatives who actually represent the IOC in their countries and their countries in the IOC. Then there are the 121 countries with no IOC representatives.

In our hemisphere, of the 42 countries with National Olympic Committees, 22 have no representatives in the IOC. Not surprisingly, the United States has three --if you include Puerto Rico, an occupied territory and US colony, which has an IOC representative-- and Canada has two.

In Africa, 40 out of 53 countries do not have representatives on the International Olympic Committee.

In Asia and Oceania, 36 out of 57 countries have no representation at the International Olympic Committee.

Naturally, Europe with 48 countries has 47 representatives on the IOC. This is particularly due to the fact that many European countries have two or more representatives on the International Olympic Committee. In all, Europe accounts for 45.2% of the 104 members with voting right in the IOC.

Three small European states --Luxembourg, with an area of 998 square miles and 417,000 people; Monaco, with 0.6 square miles and a 32,000 population and Liechtenstein, with 31,300 people in an area of 62 square miles-- each have a representative on the IOC although no one has ever heard a word about their athletes' performance in the Olympic Games. I would have no objections and it would seem fair to me if such participation were granted to all independent states, large or small, as it is the case at the United Nations.

As for Africa, Ethiopia --with its outstanding long-distance runners-- Tanzania and Madagascar, the three with a combined population of 110,600,000 in an area of 2,630,000 square kilometers, that is, 230 times the combined population of the three small European nations mentioned above, with 958 times their area do not have a single IOC representative on the Olympic Committee.

In South America, Bolivia, Ecuador and Paraguay, with a 25,400,000 population in an area of 1,788,894 square kilometers do not have a single IOC representative in any one of the three countries.

In Asia, Iran, Bangladesh and Vietnam with a 275 million population in an area of 2,124,998 square kilometers do not have a single representative on the International Olympic Committee either.

In the European Union, given that Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Portugal and Luxembourg have one IOC representative each, while the United Kingdom, Sweden, Spain, Greece, Germany, Austria, Belgium and France have two each, the Netherlands has three and Italy has four, not one of the 15 member countries lacks representation on the IOC, and altogether they account for 28 representatives and have been the host for 13 Olympic Games.

While Europe as a whole, with 48 countries, has 47 IOC representatives the Caribbean and Central and South American region with 39 countries has only 13. Africa, with 53 countries has 13 and Asia and Oceania with 57 countries have 24. The OECD countries plus Russia make up a total of 30 countries, which have 64 votes on the IOC while the 149 countries of the Third World have only 40. As a whole, the EU member countries and the rest of Europe have an overwhelming power within the IOC.

It would be difficult to reach any decision without them not only due to the number of votes they control on this committee but also because of their huge political and economic weight. To this we should add the power and influence of the United States, Canada, Japan and Australia within the International Olympic Committee. What is left to the rest of the world?

This is the worldwide distribution not only of wealth but also of sports, a symbol of peace and friendship among nations. And because this is not a matter of natural resources or material wealth but rather human, cultural and social resources it would not be difficult to make it available to all nations.

This lack of a basic sense of equity and justice helps to explain what has happened with the Olympic Games during this century. This is a heavy historical legacy.

Cuba's relations with the International Olympic Committee are normal. There is an IOC representative here. I visited the headquarters of that institution in Lausanne and the excellent Olympic museum there. All along, the IOC chairman treated me with amiable hospitality. We supported him steadfastly at the beginning of this year when he faced what was, in our opinion, an obviously shady conspiracy against him fostered by the US Senate. He was summoned for investigation at a hearing called by the US Senate Committee on Trade and Transportation, which had no right whatsoever to do this, and he refused with righteous indignation. Behind it all, under the pretext of the corruption scandal associated to the selection of Salt Lake City in the United States as the host for the 2002 Winter Olympics, was the goal of acquiring control over the International Olympic Committee, moving its headquarters from Lausanne to the United States and seizing power over the fabulously lucrative business of the Olympic sports movement.

It is hard to predict when and how the current situation will change. Just imagine what the Olympic movement could do for humanity if everyone had access to the extraordinary possibilities, prerogatives and privileges now enjoyed by only a few!

What has Cuba's role been in the Olympic Games? What has it achieved? What has been the fruit of our efforts to promote healthy clean sports? At the 1972 Olympics, we finished 14th among 122 countries. At the Montreal Olympics in 1976 --Juan torena remembers this well, and so do we-- we finished 8th

among 88 participating countries. In 1980, in Moscow we finished 4th among 81 countries; in 1992, in Spain we finished 5th among 169 countries; and in Atlanta, in 1996 we finished 8th among 197 countries. Could anyone refute these figures?

There is more to be said on this matter. In all the recent Olympic Games mentioned, with eighth, fourth, fifth and once more eighth place achieved Cuba has won the most gold medals per capita among all the attending countries.

At these recent Pan American games the United States finished first with a total of 108 titles earned through 108 gold medals. Therefore, we competed against that major sports power, the super-rich, super-powerful United States, with athletes who traveled in air-conditioned buses, who stayed in luxury air-conditioned hotels rather than in the air base barracks and who brought their own food, water and soft drinks. Still, with a population of 275 million, it won 0.39 gold medals per million.

Canada, which was awarded 64 titles, equal to the number of gold medals and has a 3.2 million population took home 2.11 gold medals per million.

Cuba, with 69 fully recognized gold titles, equivalent to 69 gold medals which, according to Olympic tradition, always determine the respective position of each participating country and with a population of 11.1 million won 6.22 gold medals per million. We were only 11 one-hundredths of a point short of winning three times the number of gold medals per capita achieved by our powerful rival, Canada, which finished third. And as far as the United States is concerned, we won 12.5 times more gold medals per million inhabitants.

On the other hand, 100% of the athletes competing for Cuba were Cubans, born and bred in Cuba, while on the American and Canadian teams there were 54 foreign athletes, some of whom did not even speak the language. It remains to be seen how many titles and respective gold medals they accounted for.

There is more: Cuba was the first and only Latin American and Caribbean country to ever take first place over the United States in a regional competition. That happened in the Pan American Games held in our country in 1991.

Nobody was charged a dime for attending the sporting events at those Games. The Pan American Games hosted by our country were a perfect example of organization, hospitality, sporting facilities in excellent locations, care and respect for all attending athletes.

That is why our country requests and demands the right to host the Olympic Games. Cuba's unblemished record, its outstanding success in developing sports in Cuba, its achievements in international events, be they regional or Olympic and its cooperation in the development of sports in the Third World make Cuba and its people worthy of this right.

We are not just claiming this for Cuba we are claiming it for all the Caribbean islands. It would be the Caribbean, more than just Cuba that would be hosting the Olympics. I am convinced that working resolutely in cooperation with the other islands of our Caribbean Sea, Cuba and the Caribbean nations could occupy second place in those Olympics, not to mention the numerous medals which could be won by Central America and the rest of Latin America where the Olympic Games have never been held.

In making this claim we are thinking about the Third World peoples, those who have never been given the right to host the Olympic Games. We are claiming this right on behalf of 4,718 million people who have been neglected and ignored, first as colonies and then as neocolonies.

What will their sporting hopes be when the entire movement turns professional and any sum of money is paid for an athlete? What will their hopes be when their athletes are driven away with money and promises and young people are imported from that world to be nationalized in developed and wealthy countries to win gold medals for them? What could their hopes be when foreign athletes are rented for a

few months just to get more medals?

The decision on which country should host the Olympic Games should move away from the method which has been progressively established, that of putting it up for auction, whereby the country which has the most money and can offer the most has the best chance of being chosen. As part of the auction they compete in offerings. The wealthiest countries compete ferociously amongst themselves: "We'll give such and such, we'll do such and such," and many of these promises are not even fulfilled.

This is way that merits and moral and historical elements are ignored; not even a basic sense of equity and justice finds room there. We could ask ourselves: With this auction system in force, when is a Third World country ever going to host the Olympic Games? When is any of those countries where 4,718 million people live, which are not industrialized and wealthy and do not belong to the OECD or the Group of Seven, going to have the possibility to host the Olympics?

As for our part, we dare state here that we are capable of hosting and organizing an exemplary Olympics. This claim cannot be based on promises of a financial nature. However, with its considerable number of technicians and highly qualified experts --if it were to host the Olympic Games in 2008 or 2012 it would possibly be able to rely on more than 40,000 actively employed-- Cuba could make an enormous contribution to the development of sports in the Third World. This being a matter of moral and human capital, no wealthy developed country of the world would be able to make the same offer; perhaps not even all of them together could make the same offer. Cuba can easily do it.

How many hotels will our country have in 2008? We already have considerable capacity; in recent years we have multiplied the capacity that we had just ten years ago. In eight or nine more years we will double our current capacity with ever more comfortable and modern hotels and by the year 2012 we will surely have tripled the capacity, quite aside from the economic development which we hope to achieve in other areas in the coming years.

It is not easy to find a country more experienced than Cuba in developing sports. It is not easy to find examples of a country with very limited resources and additionally subjected to a blockade and harassment that has promoted this activity to a degree that is recognized around the world. It is not easy to exceed Cuba's merits in this heroic effort.

In the last Olympics, in Atlanta, about 10,000 athletes, instructors and assistants took part. Assuming that just as many or even more will take part then, there is still a question: How many of those athletes and instructors will come from the Third World? Some developed and wealthy countries will go with the full quota of athletes who qualify to compete in almost every discipline. It does not seem likely that the delegations from poor and underdeveloped countries are, as yet, able to do the same.

However, for us it would be perfectly easy to receive and provide free accommodation to athletes, assistants and technicians from Third World countries that need it to take part in the Olympics. They could be accommodated in villas with all the comfort enjoyed by those who came here for the Pan American Games in 1991, or in four or five star hotels, if that is what they want. I am talking about Third World athletes. Athletes from immensely wealthy countries do not need free accommodation.

Cuba can offer to feed the Third World athletes free of charge for the duration of the competition, even if it is for three weeks. I am not, by any means, talking of grand offers; I am talking about fair and reasonable things that would enable the participation of those people who, otherwise, could not really afford it. A moral and material helping hand, which cannot offend anybody, which does not try to bribe or buy anybody; that would be our line of work. Quite unlike what recently happened at an important international competition handed over to private companies anxious to make a profit. It would be ridiculous not to offer services free of charge to all those who actually need it.

We could offer free domestic transportation, for example, to all Third World athletes taking part.

We would offer prompt and highly efficient medical services free of charge to all the Third World and all the participating athletes because we are a country with excellent sports medicine services and highly trained specialists in all fields of health care; for Cuba this is easily attainable. I reiterate, we would offer something which in my view is very important: the fullest cooperation with specialized personnel in the preparation of athletes from emerging countries, on a scale and of a quality many countries from the wealthy and developed world would find difficult to offer. In order to do that, you need people who are capable of lending a hand anywhere in the world. And Cuba has an abundance of this human capital available.

We are not going to join the auction because it would be undignified. I am talking in terms of justice, of aid for those who are our brothers and sisters and need it badly. We are not talking about going to the extent of paying the travel costs of all those who take part, or anything like it. There are other ways of cooperating in that respect. We have organized conventions, which many thousands of teachers, doctors or young people have attended and we have found ways of reducing our visitors' travel expenses. We have also hosted a world youth festival. Our country has proved that it can do a lot of things within and beyond Cuba. The 25,000 doctors who have rendered health services free of charge to other countries for long periods of time can testify to this, and many nations know it.

This is the country that is currently offering thousands of doctors to Central America, Haiti and north sub-Saharan Africa, where infant mortality is the highest in the world. Wealthy countries could not offer volunteer doctors to go and work in these places, under the most difficult conditions, where thousands of doctors from this nation willingly and resolutely go.

In wealthy societies, everybody is so accustomed to a life of comfort that no amount of money can persuade them to go to a place where there may be mosquitoes, snakes, no communications and no electric power and where you only get news of your country and family through a small short-wave portable radio.

We have such an extraordinary human capital in many domains not just in sports and education. We offer scholarships to young Third World people for them to train as technicians and sports specialists. I wonder if others offer the same.

That is why Cuba, with a high moral spirit and an extraordinary confidence in its people, in their capacity for hospitality, their organizational skills, their scientific and human resources, their customary spirit of hospitality and their wonderful tradition of respect for visiting athletes would be able to organize an Olympic Games with the highest quality and efficiency.

In view of the reasons and arguments expressed here and after explaining the rationale for asking the public opinion worldwide and all the Olympic committees, especially those of the Third World, to support Cuba's right to host the Olympic Games, we ratify our decision before you courageous and glorious athletes.

HOMELAND OR DEATH!

WE SHALL OVERCOME!

(Ovation)

Versiones Taquigráficas - Consejo de Estado

**Links**

[1] <http://www.fidelcastro.cu/en/discursos/speech-delivered-commander-chief-fidel-castro-ruz-first-secretary-central-committee>