

THE GAMES OF THE 29th OLYMPIAD IN BEIJING

Press Book

- **ABDOU DIOUF UNITES THE FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITY IN BEIJING IN THE PRESENCE OF JACQUES ROGGE**

- **THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION OF LA FRANCOPHONIE STEPS UP ACTION TO PROMOTE FRENCH AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THE GAMES OF THE 29th OLYMPIAD IN BEIJING**

- **ATHENS 1896 - BEIJING 2008:
THE OLYMPIC GAMES ARE STILL IN FRENCH**

- **OLYMPISM AND FRANCOPHONY: SHARED VALUES**

- **PROMOTING THE FRENCH LANGUAGE: THE IOF'S TEN YEAR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE**

- **WHAT IS LA FRANCOPHONIE?**

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ABDOU DIOUF UNITES THE FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITY IN BEIJING IN THE PRESENCE OF JACQUES ROGGE

The International Organisation of La Francophonie is organising a third event to promote the French language at the Beijing Olympic Games in August 2008. Unlike the two previous ones held in Athens and Turin this is a large-scale public event. It will be hosted by Abdou Diouf, Secretary General of La Francophonie, together with Jacques Rogge, President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Liu Qi, President of the Beijing Olympic Games Organising Committee (BOCOG), on August 9th at the Sofitel Wanda in Beijing.

Jean-Pierre Raffarin, who serves as the “Great Witness” or *Grand Témoin de la Francophonie* for the Games of the 29th Olympiad in Beijing (August 8th – 24th 2008), will be present alongside Abdou Diouf who appointed him to this position to observe the use of the French language in the various Olympic facilities and public areas both in the build up to and during the Games.

Abdou Diouf’s objective at this event held the day after the opening ceremony is to unite French-speaking heads of state, sports ministers, IOC members, international federation and National Olympic Committee presidents, representatives from the Olympic host cities of Vancouver, London and Sochi, and representatives from the candidate cities for the 2016 Games, as well as French-speaking athletes and artists. This celebration will promote the French language, an official Olympic language, and the values shared by the francophone community and the Olympic Movement.

The Secretary General of La Francophonie will travel to Beijing from August 8th to 11th. On August 8th he will be present at the opening ceremony. On August 9th, he will chair the official program for the Francophone Event. Lastly on August 10th, he will visit the Olympic village and the international press centre, and will hold a series of meetings with high-ranking representatives of the Chinese government and members of the IOC.

THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION OF LA FRANCOPHONIE STEPS UP ACTION TO PROMOTE FRENCH AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THE GAMES OF THE 29th OLYMPIAD IN BEIJING

Abdou Diouf, the Secretary General of La Francophonie, will travel to Beijing from August 8th to 11th. During his stay he will attend the opening ceremony, chair the francophone event organised by the International Organisation of La Francophonie (IOF) on August 9th, visit several sites and hold meetings with high-ranking Chinese officials and members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

Jean-Pierre Raffarin will continue to serve as the “Great Witness”, or *Grand Témoin de la Francophonie* and observe the use of the French language during these Games until August 12th. Audrey Delacroix, Commissioner for the French Language at the Beijing Olympic Games, will accompany him on visits of Olympic sports facilities and public area and to competitions and other official events to see if French is used correctly in lettering, signs and information documents as well as in spoken announcements. **The *Grand Témoin* will submit his report to the Secretary General of La Francophonie and it will be presented on the periphery of the Summit of La Francophonie which will be held in Quebec from October 17th to 19th 2008.**

Jean-Pierre Raffarin, former Prime Minister of France, was appointed as *Grand Témoin de la Francophonie* at the 29th Olympiad in Beijing by the Secretary General of La Francophonie. The *Grand Témoin's* job is to raise awareness, observe and increase use of the French language in accordance with Rule 24 of the Olympic Charter which declares French to be one of the two official Olympic languages together with English. Jean-Pierre Raffarin made two investigative trips to Beijing in 2007.

For the first time a convention on the role of the French in the Olympics was signed between the IOF and the Beijing Olympic Games organizing committee (BOCOG) on November 26, 2007, in the presence of Presidents Hu Jintao and Nicolas Sarkozy. This convention details how the IOF, its member states and governments and the BOCOG will cooperate. **It was officially handed to Jacques Rogge, Chairman of the IOC, by Abdou Diouf and Jean-Pierre Raffarin, *Grand Témoin de la Francophonie*, on January 23, 2008 in Lausanne.**

The accredited ambassadors of French-speaking countries in Beijing joined forces to accompany and monitor the implementation of the measures to promote French as an official Olympic language. A permanent Committee of French-speaking ambassadors was set up by the *Grand Témoin* in 2007. An executive Committee is responsible for contact with the Chinese authorities. Its members are the ambassadors of Senegal (Chairman), France (Secretary), Mauritius, Morocco, Burundi, Madagascar, Belgium, Gabon and Lebanon. Lastly, a cooperation Committee comprising an equal number of French-speaking and Chinese representatives was set up to monitor the application of the recommendations made in the Convention signed between the IOF and the BOCOG. The members of this Committee are Cambodia, Tunisia, Switzerland and Canada.

The IOF and the Senegalese and French National Olympic Committees (NOCs) called a **meeting of the French-speaking NOCs in Beijing on April 6, 2008**, on the fringes of the 16th General Assembly of the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC). On this occasion, Ousmane Paye, the Secretary General's special advisor, also called on the accredited ambassadors of French-speaking countries in Beijing and organised a meeting uniting the ambassadors, the French-speaking NOC representatives as well as the representatives of the IOC, the ANOC and the BOCOG. **A first meeting of the French-speaking NOCs was organised on August 9th 2007.**

ATHENS 1896 - BEIJING 2008: THE OLYMPIC GAMES ARE STILL IN FRENCH

The 29th Olympic Games, which will be held from August 8 to 24, 2008 in Beijing (China), provide an opportunity to bolster the status of the French language at the Olympics. French is the native language of the modern Games and as such helps promote cultural diversity and combat linguistic uniformity on the international scene. The status of the French language was bolstered in the Athens Games of 2004 and in the Turin Games of 2006. This time, the Beijing Games of 2008 must mark the beginning of a new period of openness, exchange and respect between people, and reflect the values that are so dear to both the Olympic movement and the francophone community.

The Olympic Charter is quite clear about the status of the French language. Rule 24 states: *"the official languages of the International Olympic Committee are French and English"*; and add: *"in the case of divergence between French and English texts ...the French text shall prevail"*. These two major international languages were given parity by the founders of the modern Olympic Games from the very start - a decision of great significance in view of the Olympic vocation to promote dialogue between peoples and guarantee linguistic and cultural diversity.

A hundred years later, with globalisation tending to put the Anglo-Saxon language and cultures in a dominant position, respecting this purpose is still just as important, and fostering linguistic diversity is ever more vital in the struggle against uniformity. In this context, the impact of an event such as the Olympic Games is tremendous. The Games are a strategic and symbolic forum through which a universal message of mutual respect between cultures and languages is conveyed to the entire international community, and an appeal for dialogue and communication is made.

French is an international language shared by sixty-eight States and governments around the world. It is indispensable to the National Olympic Committees of these countries and to the thousands of athletes, journalists and French-speaking visitors taking part in the Beijing Games.

French alongside Chinese and English

At the initiative of Mr. Abdou Diouf, Secretary General of La Francophonie, a new landmark has been met to promote and boost the visibility and use of the French language during the 29th Games. The convention signed between the IOF and the BOCOG on November 26, 2007 specifies the areas in which the French language must be used, in compliance with Rule 24 of the Olympic Charter.

It recommends a series of actions in support of the BOCOG's efforts: translation of the Olympic Games' website, of the INFO2008 intranet information system, and of signage at the Olympic sites; assistance with the recruitment of 40 French-speaking translators and journalists for the duration of the Games; French language training for the hundreds of Chinese volunteers and lastly the organisation of francophone cultural events. The convention also requires the creation of a coordination committee between the BOCOG and the permanent committee of French-speaking accredited ambassadors which is responsible for implementing the measures.

A “Great Witness” of la Francophonie

Ever since 2004, the Secretary General of La Francophonie has chosen an important and independent French-speaking personality to be the “Great Witness” or *Grand Témoin de la Francophonie*. This person monitors the use and status of the French language during the Olympic Games. Jean-Pierre Raffarin, senator and former Prime Minister of France, will be the *Grand Témoin* in Beijing during the 2008 29th Olympic Games. He will visit Olympic sports facilities and public areas to see if French is used correctly in lettering, signs and information documents as well as in spoken announcements. Like former Great Witnesses, Hervé Bourges (2004 Athens Games) and Lise Bissonnette (2006 Turin Games), Jean-Pierre Raffarin will present a report on the use of the French language highlighting satisfactory elements and if necessary suggesting improvements for the next Olympic Games.

OLYMPISM AND FRANCOPHONY: SHARED VALUES

The ties between Olympism and Francophony go beyond the French language. Both movements share many values and ideals. The role of the Games, in the thinking of their founder, was to use sport to build peace in the world. By bringing together French-speaking people from all over the world around a common language the Francophone movement shares the same objective. It seeks to facilitate exchanges and understanding between people, to foster cultural diversity and to serve peace.

The International Organisation of La Francophonie's logo, a five-coloured ring representing the universal character of a linguistic community united in its diversity, is very similar to the five interlacing rings on the Olympic flag, representing the five continents. The similarity shows how close the philosophy of the Olympics and the IOF are. There is good reason for this. French, *langue des Lumières*, or the language of the Enlightenment, is closely associated with values such as democracy, human rights, humanism, peace, solidarity and respect, for which it is the vehicle worldwide. Consequently, the choice of French as one of the two official languages of the IOC has special significance: the French language, more than any other, reflects the Olympic message.

The Games are not a simple international competition governed by rules. They are organised according to the principles set out in the Olympic Charter, another similarity with the IOF whose aims are set out in a solemn text of this sort.

Olympic Charter, Languages, Rule 24

"1. The official languages of the IOC are French and English. 2. Simultaneous interpretation into German, Spanish, Russian and Arabic must also be provided. 3. In the case of divergence between French and English texts of the Olympic charter and all other IOC documents, the French text shall prevail unless expressly provided otherwise in writing".

Olympic Charter, Fundamental Principles, Article 1

"Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sports with culture, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental principles."

Charte de la Francophonie, «Objectives » Clause 1, Article 1

"Aware of the links between its members through their shared language and in hope of using these links to serve peace, cooperation, solidarity and sustainable development, the aim of the International Organisation of La Francophonie is: to assist the introduction and development of democracy, to help conflict prevention, handling and resolution, to support the rule of law and uphold human rights; to increase dialogue between cultures and civilizations; to bring together peoples through mutual knowledge and to increase solidarity through projects of multilateral cooperation for economic development and to promote education and training."

PROMOTING THE FRENCH LANGUAGE: THE IOF'S TEN YEAR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

The promotion of the French language on the international scene has been one of the International Organisation of La Francophonie's (IOF) ten year strategic objectives ever since the Summit of French-speaking heads of State and governments held in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) in November 2004.

French is an international language given its status and use as an official and working language in international organisations, European institutions and major international cultural and sports events. In order to combat the perverse effect of globalisation on languages and in an effort to preserve linguistic diversity throughout the world, the IOF has implemented a scheme to preserve the French language's status as an international language and increase its presence.

On June 2nd 2008, the Secretary General of La Francophonie launched a survey on the role of the French language in the international sports world and in the Olympic movement. The questionnaire was sent to the international federations, to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and to all the international sports organisations. Its objective is to assess the position and status of the French language within these organisations, as well as the role of French-speaking members and the requirements of these organisations regarding training. Through this survey, the IOF hopes to gain better knowledge of the needs of its partners in the sports world so that it can place its know-how at their service and help coordinate their measures.

UNITED IN DIVERSITY

The International Organisation of La Francophonie's 68 member states and governments account for over 803 million people, 200 million of whom speak French regularly, with varying degrees of fluency.

The cohesion and originality of the French-speaking community lies in the sharing of a common language. The French language is a favoured means of oral and written communication. It is used and developed both in the French-speaking world and internationally.

The IOF respects cultural and linguistic diversity and promotes multilingualism in the French-speaking world, where partner languages cohabiting with French are given equal treatment. It forges alliances and sets up synergies with large international linguistic areas as such as the Spanish, Portuguese, English and Arabic speaking zones.

French is the official language of 32 countries. In all French-speaking countries, French coexists with one or several official languages, mother tongues, or national languages. Thus French has the double privilege of being a common language for very different peoples and consequently a means of communication between them and their cultures.

The IOF's commitment to the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity stems quite naturally from the historical, geographic and cultural realities of its diverse community. In most international organisations, for instance the United Nations, the World Health Organisation, UNESCO, or UNICEF, French is an official and working language. Likewise, the Olympic Charter has designated French as an official language ever since 1896.

French is also a language of instruction in all five continents:

- - 90 million people learn French in 170 countries worldwide,
- - There are 900,000 French teachers worldwide,
- - 80 million students attend French schools.

The Games of La Francophonie: Art, Sports and the French language

Every four years, in the post-Olympic year, approximately 3,000 young men and women participate in the Games of La Francophonie to celebrate, exchange ideas and open up to different cultures. In a blend of sports and artistic competitions, these Games combine the exercise of body and mind harking back to the Olympic Games of antiquity.

The achievements of the athletes encounter the talent and creativity of the artists.

Ever since the first Games of La Francophonie were held in Casablanca and Rabat (Morocco) in 1989, four others have been held in Paris in 1994; Antananarivo (Madagascar) in 1997, in Ottawa - Hull region (Canada) in 2001 and in Niamey (Niger) in 2005. The next Games of La Francophonie will be held in Beirut (Lebanon) in 2009.

WHAT IS LA FRANCOPHONIE ?

The International Organisation of La Francophonie (IOF) represents 803.44 million people, including 200 million French speakers. Its mission is to embody the active solidarity between the 68 states and governments it represents (55 members and 13 observers), which in turn account for one third of the United Nation's membership.

The IOF's objective is to contribute to improving the standard of living of the populations it represents by helping them become the actors of their own development. The IOF respects cultural diversity, serves peace, democracy, education and sustainable development.

- The francophone institutions have a total annual budget of €250 million. This includes the IOF's budget and that of the operators (the *AUF* (or Academic Agency of La Francophonie), TV5Monde, The Senghor University of Alexandria, and the *AIMF* (or International Association of Francophone Mayors));
- The international organisation acts on a political level and conducts actions of multilateral cooperation;
- The mission of the *Institut de l'énergie et de l'environnement de la Francophonie (IEPF* or Institute of Energy and Environment of La Francophonie, based in Quebec City, is to help bolster national capacity and develop partnerships in the fields of energy and the environment;
- The *Institut de la Francophonie numérique* or Institute of Digital Francophonie, was invited by the Secretary General of the United Nations to join the Strategic Council of GAID (Global Alliance for ICT and Development) because of its capacity to mobilize large numbers;
- Over 693 university higher education and research establishments in 81 countries are members of the *Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF)* or the Academic Agency of La Francophonie;
- There are 41 French-speaking digital campuses for students at universities of the South;
- The *Association Internationale des Maires Francophones (AIMF)* or International Association of Francophone Mayors comprises over 172 French-speaking capitals and cities in 46 countries;
- There are 215 reading centres in rural areas in 17 countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Middle East.

4 major missions

- **To promote the French language and cultural and linguistic diversity;**
- **To foster peace, democracy and Human Rights;**
- **To support education, training, higher education and research;**
- **To develop cooperation at the service of sustainable development.**

The French language around the world

- French is either the official language or one of the official languages in 32 of the IOF's member states and governments;
- French is one of the official languages of the United Nations and, together with English, it is the working language of the Secretariat.
- French is an official language of the European Union, the African Union, the International Court of Justice, the Olympic Movement, etc.
- French is the third language on the Web accounting for 5% of webs pages after English, (45%) and German (7%) and in front of Spanish (4.5%). (Source: Funredes, 2006).

68 States and Governments

55 Members:

Albania • Principality of Andorra • Kingdom of Belgium • Benin • Bulgaria • Burkina Faso • Burundi • Cambodia • Cameroon • Canada • Canada-New-Brunswick • Canada-Quebec • Cape Verde • Central African Republic • Chad • Côte d'Ivoire • French Community of Belgium • Comoros • Congo • Democratic Republic of the Congo • Cyprus • Djibouti • Dominica • Egypt • Republic of Macedonia • France • Gabon • Ghana • Greece • Guinea • Guinea-Bissau • Equatorial Guinea • Haiti • Laos • Lebanon • Luxembourg • Madagascar • Mali • Morocco • Mauritius • Mauritania • Moldova • Monaco • Niger • Romania • Rwanda • Saint Lucia • São Tomé and Príncipe • Senegal • Seychelles • Switzerland • Togo • Tunisia • Vanuatu • Vietnam.

13 Observers:

Armenia • Austria • Croatia • Czech Republic • Georgia • Hungary • Lithuania • Mozambique • Poland • Serbia • Slovakia • Slovenia • Ukraine.

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