

Chapter 4: Olympics

...These (set of values) are formed at a young age, and I was fortunate to have had great learning experiences. One of which, was participating in the 1960 Olympic Games and winning the Gold medal for sailing, in the Dragon class. The experience was in fact so stimulating, that I am still actively involved as a member of the International Olympic Committee and of the International Sailing Federation of which I am President of Honour.

This year is the 60th anniversary of the London Olympics. But it is also, of course, an Olympic Games year.

This year's games promise to be fascinating, not just for sporting reasons, but because they will also provide a glimpse of China emerging as an economic powerhouse and hopefully opening up China in many respects.

With so many terrible things happening in the world, it's an appropriate time to remind ourselves that the Olympic Games are the only international symbol the world truly recognizes. They stand for unity, freedom and above all peace. And I hope that we might, at last, start to see the realization of these ideals.

In the ancient times, Olympia was considered a sacred place, while a truce – ekehiria - was initiated during the Games. All conflicts among the ancient Greek cities stopped. What a wonderful idea. This concept of ekehiria, the greek word for truce, is now accepted by the United Nations and promoted by the International Olympic family. We want this to spread and be accepted by every nation in today's troubled world.

In my competitive sporting days, I learned the value of teamwork and hours of hard work, training and concentration. But I have also learnt the significance of another of the main principles of the Olympic movement: that participation is more important than personal gain.

Aristotle said: "At the Olympic Games, it is not the finest and the strongest men who are crowned, but they who enter the lists."

In other words, to be an Olympic athlete is to be an Olympic winner.