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Olympic flame for PyeongChang 2018 shines brightly as Olympic Movement shows its support at Ancient Olympia.

The Olympic flame-lighting ceremony for the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018 took place today in Ancient Olympia, Greece. It marks the start of an incredible journey that will bring the Olympic spirit to the Republic of Korea and its citizens, and inspire the entire world.

The Olympic Torch Relay starts the final countdown to one of the greatest athletic and cultural events in the world. Taking place as it does against the backdrop of Olympia, the Olympic flame-lighting ceremony serves more than any other tradition to connect the modern Games with their ancient origins and – like the messengers who proclaimed the sacred Olympic truce – the runners who carry the Olympic flame will carry the message of the Olympic values on their journey.

As a symbol of the good that the Olympic Games can do to bring the world together, the President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Thomas Bach, alongside a number of National Olympic Committee (NOC) leaders, took part in the ceremony to show their support for the Games, which will begin on 9 February next year.

Representatives of the NOCs of the upcoming Olympic Games and Olympic Winter Games included: Tsunekazu Takeda (JPN), Zaiqing Yu (CHN), Denis Masegla (FRA) and Lawrence F. Probst III (USA). They joined the President of the PyeongChang 2018 Organising Committee (POCOG), Lee Hee-beom and the President of the South-Korean NOC Kee-Heung Lee, as well as Spyros Capralos from the Hellenic Olympic Committee (GRE).

“As our founder, Pierre de Coubertin, once said: ‘The Olympic Games are a pilgrimage to the past and an act of faith in the future,’” President Bach told the crowd at the ceremony.

He continued: “What better expression of this faith in the future, than the presence of the President of the Hellenic Olympic Committee, together with the Presidents of the National Olympic Committees of the Republic of Korea, Japan, China, France and the United States of America. Together, they represent the future hosts of Olympic Games, PyeongChang 2018, Tokyo 2020, Beijing 2022, Paris 2024 and Los Angeles 2028. Today’s ceremony marks the beginning of the celebration of the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018.”

The PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Torch Relay is an invitation to join in the celebrations around the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018 and be inspired by its message: “Passion. Connected.”



The IOC President was joined by the Chair of the PyeongChang 2018 Coordination Commission and IOC Executive Board Member Gunilla Lindberg and a number of other IOC members.

"I am very proud to be here today in Ancient Olympia to see the Olympic flame begin its journey to PyeongChang in the Republic of Korea," said Lee Hee-beom, President of POCOG.

He continued: "The start of the Olympic Torch Relay today is one of the most important milestones in our journey to February 9th. The Olympic Torch Relay will be a celebration of the passion that our nation has for the Olympic Movement as we welcome the flame back to our shores for the first time since the Seoul Olympic Games of 1988. Korea is ready to welcome the world again in PyeongChang."

Also present at the ceremony was Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos.

"Today's ceremony and the Olympic Games send a very important message to the world," he said. "Under the leadership of President Bach, the Olympic Movement continues to play a unique role in the world."

Twenty-four-year-old cross-country skier Apostolos Angelis from Greece, who has already secured his participation in PyeongChang 2018, was the first torchbearer. He passed on the flame to famous football player Park Ji-Sung from the Republic of Korea.

Over the following week, the flame will travel around Greece. It will cover 2,129km on Greek territory and will arrive at the Acropolis on 30 October. Some 505 torchbearers will participate, and 36 welcome ceremonies will be held in 20 municipalities over the eight days. The ceremony to hand over the flame to the PyeongChang 2018 Organising Committee will be held at the Panathenaic Stadium on 31 October.

Then the flame will make its way 8,500km east, to the Korean city of Incheon, arriving on 1 November to coincide with 100 days to go until the start of the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018.

Thereafter, the Olympic Torch Relay will see the flame embark on a tour of the entire host country, taking in nine provinces and eight major cities, before it finally arrives at the PyeongChang Olympic Stadium in time for the Opening Ceremony on 9 February 2018.

The Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018 will run from 9 to 21 February in PyeongChang, and will feature approximately 3,000 athletes from 95 NOCs.

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The International Olympic Committee is a not-for-profit independent international organisation made up of volunteers, which is committed to building a better world through sport. It redistributes more than 90 per cent of its income to the wider sporting movement, which means that every day the equivalent of 3.4 million US dollars goes to help athletes and sports organisations at all levels around the world.

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