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Story Headline: PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Flame Lighting Ceremony takes place in Ancient Olympia.

Location: Olympia, Greece.

Date: 24th October 2017

STORY SCRIPT

The world-famous Olympic flame was today lit in Olympia, Greece, marking the countdown to the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018 in the Republic of Korea.

President of the International Olympic Committee Thomas Bach was joined by other Olympic leaders to witness the traditional flame lighting ceremony.

Outside the 2600 year old Temple of Hera, a 'high priestess' ignited the Olympic torch before handing it to first torchbearer, 24 year old cross-country skier Apostolos Angelis from Greece.

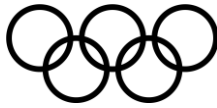
He passed on the flame to Republic of Korea and former Manchester United footballer Park Ji-sung.



“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.

“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”.

Over the following week the flame will travel 2129km around Greece, arriving at the Acropolis in Athens 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 in Athens’ Panathenaic Stadium on 31 October.



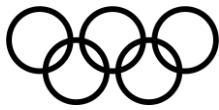
The flame will then make its way 8500km east to the Korean city of Incheon, arriving on 1 November to coincide with 100 days to go until the start of the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018.

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 3000 athletes from 95 NOCs.

Earlier, torchbearer Park Ji-sung said:

“It’s a great honour to be able to represent our country and then be first torch bearer. I was always watching the Olympic Games when I was young, and then I was dreaming to become a sportperson, and then now



actually, and I am really pleased to be here doing the torch relay. I am really happy to be here”.

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 the PyeongChang 2018 Organising Committee.

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".

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

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