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STORY HEADLINE: IOC President Thomas Bach says the Olympic Flame lighting ceremony a strong signal of commitment to the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020.

LOCATION: Athens, Greece
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LANGUAGE: English

Broadcast quality footage available at the IOC Newsroom: http://iocnewsroom.com

STORY SCRIPT:

00:06 SOUNDBITE: IOC President, Thomas Bach (English Language).
Q: Despite all the problems at the moment for the Olympic Games in Tokyo, this is a great moment?
“‘This is a great moment, it is reminding us of our roots more than 3,000 years ago, but it’s also at the same time a strong signal of our commitment and the commitment of our Japanese friends to make these Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 a great success in the summer of this year.’”

00:00 SOUNDBITE: IOC President, Thomas Bach (English Language).
Q: There are problems with the qualification of athletes for the Games, what will the IOC do about that?
“‘There the qualification is a challenge now with the Games. We’re still 19 weeks ahead of the Games and, on the other hand, there are also many measures being taken by many authorities around the world to contain the virus. So this is as far as the Games are concerned, as far as the qualifications are concerned, this is about today and there we’re working closely with the International Federations, with the National Olympic Committees and with the athletes to adapt wherever necessary the qualification system, either to extend qualification time or to find other tools to allow the athletes to qualify. They can rest assured that we’re doing everything we can to ensure a fair qualification under these challenging circumstances.’”

00:00 SOUNDBITE: IOC President, Thomas Bach (English Language).
Q: Are you still fully committed to going ahead with the Games in Tokyo? What makes you so certain that this is the correct decision?
“‘What makes us so committed and where we are encouraged, are the many measures being taken by so many governments and authorities around the world to contain the virus now 19 weeks before the Games, and then also to make good use of this time, these 19 weeks. So we are in support, we are fully committed and I’m really encouraging the
athletes to go ahead with their preparations and their qualifications with full steam and then we will all welcome them to Tokyo for a great Olympic Games.”

00:00 SOUNDBITE: IOC President, Thomas Bach (English Language).
Q: The Tokyo 2020 Olympic Flame was lit here today. Was it a memorable ceremony?
“It’s a unique place. Here you feel the Olympic spirit at every place you go. When you are entering the stadium here through the tunnel, where 3000 years ago the athletes were entering through the dark tunnel to the sunlight. 40,000 spectators already at this time expecting them, you know and you have an idea at least, how these athletes must have felt. Such tension but also such joy. And this Olympic spirit you just feel it here at its best.”

00:00 SOUNDBITE: IOC President, Thomas Bach (English Language).
Q: You spoke to the first torchbearer, Greek Olympian Anna Korakaki. What did you say to her?
“To get ready for Tokyo. Because she is the most successful Greek Olympian with two medals and she is preparing for Tokyo and she is also a symbol of the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 because these Olympic Games will be the first Olympic Games with gender equality among the athletes, so I think she was also feeling this and enjoying this very much.”

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