STORY HEADLINE: International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach is awarded Seoul Peace Prize

LOCATION: Seoul, Republic of Korea and Lausanne, Switzerland

DATE: 26 October 2020

LANGUAGE: English

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

STORY SCRIPT: The International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach has today been awarded the Seoul Peace Prize in recognition of the work he has done to help promote peace through sport.

In particular, the Seoul Peace Prize Cultural Foundation highlighted THREE major achievements:

- “Contributing to peace through sport in the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia”, with the 2018 Winter Olympics “serving not only as an Olympic symbol of peace, but also as a stepping stone for peace”.
- “President Bach has continuously supported refugees through the creation of the Refugee Olympic Team and the Olympic Refuge Foundation. He contributed to promoting the human rights of refugees by raising global awareness of refugee issues and renewing the world’s perspective on refugees.”
- “President Bach led the internal reforms of the IOC through Olympic Agenda 2020. This roadmap also contributed to peace and cooperation among states.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, President Bach did not travel to Seoul to accept the award, but he spoke of his delight in a video address from Olympic House in Lausanne, Switzerland.

He said: “It is with much gratefulness and appreciation that I humbly accept this distinction, and I would like to thank the Seoul Peace Prize Cultural Foundation for this honour. This prize belongs to the entire IOC and the whole of the Olympic Movement, because without the support of so many around the globe, the achievements for peace through sport could never have been accomplished.”

President Bach is the 15th recipient of the award, which was introduced in 1990 in the wake of the Olympic Games Seoul 1988.

President Bach told the audience: “The purpose of the Olympic Games was always to promote peace through sport. When Pierre de Coubertin founded the International Olympic Committee in 1894, he was supported in this mission by the presence of six future winners of the Nobel Peace Prize.”
He went on to say that, since then, the IOC had pursued this mission, but “like other peace movements, the Olympic Movement has sometimes fallen short. In our efforts to build a more peaceful world through sport, sometimes we have failed, and have been failed”.

President Bach emphasised that, while sport can open the door to dialogue about peace, “we know very well that sport alone cannot create peace”. He added: “We cannot take decisions on war and peace. This is the realm of politics and not of sport.”

The role of the Olympic Games, with regard to peace, is to “set an example for a world where everyone respects the same rules and one another. They can inspire us to solve problems in friendship and solidarity. They can build bridges leading to better understanding among people.”

To achieve this universal message of peace, the IOC is promoting worldwide solidarity and inclusivity, and embraces diversity as an enrichment to society.

Turning to the IOC Refugee Olympic Team and the Olympic Refuge Foundation, President Bach said: “The refugee athletes demonstrated to a global audience that we are all part of the same humanity. Their participation in the Olympic Games was a clear signal that refugees are our fellow human beings – that they are an enrichment to society just as they are an enrichment to our Olympic community.”

On governance reforms, President Bach emphasised that “our ability to make a difference in the world rests on our credibility and integrity. For this reason, good governance is a central feature of Olympic Agenda 2020”.

The Seoul Peace Prize comes with a USD 200,000 prize which the President will donate to the Olympic Refugee Foundation and three other social charities. The award has had a number of illustrious previous winners, including Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations; Václav Havel, former Czech President; Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF); German Chancellor Angela Merkel; and Ban Ki-moon, former Secretary-General of the United Nations.

And it was His Excellency Ban Ki-moon who accepted the award on President Bach’s behalf.

He said: “The United Nations Charter says that the three principles and values are first of all peace and security, development and human rights. Sports has a very clear role to play in promoting peace and facilitating the disputes among the people. In that regard, I deeply appreciate the initiative and vision of President Thomas Bach for initiating this Sports For Peace initiative campaign.

“I worked very closely with him to materialize his vision. In 2013, August the 23rd, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution recognizing his vision, Peace Through Sports. It was unanimously adopted by the United Nations General Assembly member states. I was very, very happy and I have been working very closely with him to really implement how sports can facilitate and help and promote peace and also reconciliation among conflicting parties.

“If I may say one quick example, is his initiative and support for the joint South-North Korean Winter Olympic Games in 2018 in Pyeongchang. It is still vivid in my memory and I think it will be the same to millions and millions of people around the world who have watched the
entrance of joint South-North Korean teams in Pyeongchang and that was really exciting and inspiring and quite dramatic scenes which we have seen."

Yeom Jae-ho, Chairman of the Seoul Peace Prize Cultural Foundation, praised President Bach not only for his work to bring together the unified Korean team in 2018, but also the introduction of the Refugee Olympic Team in 2016.

He said: "He is a very rare President as he supports the refugees, because the refugee issues are a very serious problem in the world and then he invited a lot of refugees to the Olympic Games and that is a very good signal and importance for World Peace.

"And secondly, he also supported the Pyeongchang Olympic Games (2018) and Seoul Olympic Games in 1988.

"North Korea didn't participate at that time (1988), but this time thanks to his help North Korean athletes and the South Korean athletes came together and they participated in the Pyeongchang Winter Olympic Games. So it is a very marvelous signal and the symbolic issues for World Peace."

Congratulating President Bach, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea, Chung Sye-kyun, said: “President Bach played a fundamental role in transforming the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018 into the Peace Olympics, putting them beyond all political tensions as a symbol of hope.”

SHOTLIST:
00:00 Arrivals Seoul, South Korea, 15th Seoul Peace Prize Awards - Seoul Peace Prize Cultural Foundation Chairman Yeom Jae-ho and former United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon take their seats.
00:08 Presenting the award on stage, Seoul Peace Prize Cultural Foundation Chairman Yeom Jae-ho.
00:13 IOC President Thomas Bach joins the ceremony virtually from Olympic House, Lausanne, Switzerland.
00:19 Pan L-R of the guests seated at the awards ceremony.
00:24 His Excellency Ban Ki-moon former United Nations Secretary General on stage
00:30 Chairman Yeom Jae-ho presents the award to his Excellency Ban Ki-moon who accepted the award on behalf of IOC President Thomas Bach.

00:40 SOUNDBITE: Thomas Bach, IOC President (English Language)
"It is with much gratefulness that I humbly accept this distinction, and I would like to thank the Seoul Peace Prize Cultural Foundation and the Selection Committee for this great honour. This prize belongs to the entire IOC and the whole of the Olympic Movement, because without the support of so many around the globe, the achievements for peace through sport could never have been accomplished.

Although I could not attend the ceremony in person, I am comforted by the fact that His Excellency Mr Ban Ki-moon is present to collect the award trophy on my behalf. And I thank him warmly for this great gesture of friendship.

The power of the Olympic Games is their universality – uniting the entire world in peaceful competition. To ensure that this unifying power of the Olympic Games can unfold, our relationship with politics must be based on solid principles. Navigating a values-based organisation like ours through a highly political and commercialised world requires the IOC to be strictly committed to political neutrality. Only this principle of political neutrality ensures
that the Olympic Games can stand above and beyond the political differences that exist in our world. The Olympic Games are the only event that brings the entire world together in peaceful competition. They are a celebration of the unity of humanity in all our diversity, uniting the best athletes of all 206 National Olympic Committees and the IOC Refugee Olympic Team. The Olympic athletes personify the values of excellence, friendship, respect and solidarity. They are competitors in sport, but at the same time, they live peacefully together under one roof in the Olympic Village. At the Olympic Games, there is no discrimination, everyone respects the same rules, regardless of social background, gender, religion or political belief. At the Olympic Games, we are all equal. In this way, the Olympic Games show us that despite all our differences it is possible for humankind to live together in peace and harmony.

04:13 Wide shot of the stage with IOC President Thomas Bach on the screen.

04:21 SOUNDbite: His Excellency Ban Ki-moon, Former United Nations Secretary General (English Language)
“The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution recognising his vision - peace through sports. It was unanimously adopted by the United Nations General Assembly member states. I was very, very happy and I have been working very closely with him to really implement how sports can facilitate and help and promote peace and also reconciliation among conflicting parties. If I may say one quick example, is his initiative and support for joint South-North Korean Winter Olympic Games in 2018 in Pyeongchang. It is still vivid in my memory and I think it will be the same to millions and millions of people around the world who have watched the entrance of joint South-North Korean teams in Pyeongchang and that was really exciting and inspiring and quite dramatic scenes which we have seen.”

05:44 SOUNDbite: Yeom Jae-ho, Chairman of the Seoul Peace Prize Cultural Foundation (English Language)
QUESTION: What is the President’s contribution to peace?
“There are two parts to the answer. The first is that he is a very rare President as he supports the refugees, because the refugee issue is a very serious problem in the world and then he invited a lot of refugee athletes to the Olympic Games and that is a very good signal and importance for world peace.
“And the second one, is that he also supported the PyeongChang Olympic Games (2018) and Seoul Olympic Games (1988). At the Seoul Olympic Games, North Korea did not participate at that time, but this time thanks to his help, North Korean athletes and the South Korean athletes came together and they participated in the PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games. So it is a very marvelous signal and the symbolic issue for world peace.”

06:42 SOUNDbite: Thomas Bach, IOC President (English Language)
QUESTION: How can sport and the Olympic movement promote peace?
“The Olympic Games are the only event which brings the entire world together in a peaceful competition. Therefore the Olympic Games can be an example for living peacefully together, for unity of all humanity in all our diversity, and to make this possible we have to concentrate on sport, we have to know about our limitations. We can not create peace alone, but we can contribute to addressing many of the conflicts which are leading then to wars or disputes, this is how we in particular, through worldwide solidarity, are trying to bring people together, to respect each other because at the Olympic Games we are all equal.”