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68TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**Sport for peace and development:
Building a peaceful and better world through sport and
the Olympic ideal: draft resolution (A/68/L.8) [item 11]**

**Statement by
H.E. Ambassador Michel Spinellis
Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations**

**NEW YORK
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Mr. President,

Dating back from the 8th Century BC, the ancient Olympic Games were meant to be a force for peace and solidarity among ancient Greek city-states that declared truce for a period of 7 days before the beginning and 7 days after the end of the Games. Before every Olympiad, heralds in the city of Elis announced the truce, which was realized as a cessation of hostilities, a prohibition of entry in the city of military forces, a pause of any legal dispute and the suspension of the imposition of death penalties. The ultimate goal was the peaceful conduct of the Games by protecting the city from invasion and ordering individuals and state authorities to refrain from interfering with the safe passage of the athletes. As Thucydides claims, in case States violated the truce, their athletes were banned from participating

The concept of the Olympic Truce was born and carried out for a period of 1200 years. Greeks saw in the Games a chance to replace conflict with friendly competition. This aspect of Olympism was of great importance to Pierre, baron de Coubertin, who revived the Olympic Games as a firm believer of their potential to advance international understanding and promote world peace. His initiative paved the way to the embodiment of the ideal of Olympic Truce to the modern Olympic Games.

In today's world, emphasis on Olympic peace has become a major feature of modern Olympic ideology. The foundation of the International Olympic Truce Center, for the creation of which Greece actively toiled with IOC, gave a new dynamism to the pursuit of peace. Most importantly, the inclusion of the Olympic Truce to the UN framework, for the first time with UN Resolution 48/11 in 1993, granted a distinct role to the ideal, given that the United Nations and the Olympic movement share common values and goals. We should bear in mind that in a world of differences, inequalities and conflicts, even an agreement for a temporary truce is an achievement of the international community. Therefore, it is our responsibility to continue to herald for the Olympic truce and spare no effort to ensure its actual implementation.

In the context of the UN and its role as a forum for world peace, this year's Resolution "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal" specifies the request to States for observance of the Olympic Truce for 7 days before until 7 days after the Games, mirroring the period of ancient Truce. This resolution's goal is to reiterate the value of sports, culture, education and sustainable development towards a peaceful planet. It further elaborates on the role of sports to promote social inclusion, without discrimination of any kind, tolerance and understanding, aiming at raising awareness around their potential for peace. In the same vein, the Resolution welcomes the establishment of the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, which is set for the sole goal of mobilizing for action towards peace.

In 2014, the Russian Federation will host the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi. I seize this opportunity to wish them every success in this difficult endeavor. The task of the rest of us is to meet our responsibilities by observing the Olympic Truce and make peace a feasible goal. We should all find inspiration in next year's Olympic Games and reflect on how sports could be used as a propitious tool to reduce tensions and to build bridges. Finally, with a sense of collectivity, we should make a difference and, for the first time, even for a short period of time, we should put the arms down and make the Olympic Truce a reality.

Thank you.