President Bauer, Honorary President Olin, host Presidents Richard and Jenson, members of the CSIT, other distinguished guests, comrades and friends

It is a heartfelt honour for me to participate in this centennial celebration. Ever since I first heard of the socialist workers’ sports international, as an Olympian and young historian in Canada in the 1970s, I have been telling my colleagues, students, teammates and the public that the workers’ sports movement represents the highest ideals of inclusive, socially progressive sport, and as much as any other sporting movement, organizes opportunities in ways that bring people together in a spirit of intercultural respect and understanding, not enmity. I love to point out that the Workers’ Olympics of the interwar period were the largest multi-sport games ever held, with 80,000 estimated participants in the Games of Vienna in 1931, 25,000 of whom were women. By comparison, the International Olympic Committee’s Games in Los Angeles the following year saw only 1,408 compete, including only 107 women. The Workers’ Games were held under the banner of ‘No More War’. While the International Olympic Committee (IOC) barred athletes from the ‘aggressor’ countries of World War One from its Games of 1920 and 1924, the Workers’ Olympics made a special effort to include everyone. Sadly, those Games did not survive the horrors of Nazism and World War Two. Yet the workers’ sports movement did
survive and it continued to demonstrate a progressive leadership. During the long struggle against racism and apartheid in South Africa, for example, the CSIT was one of the first sporting internationals to come to the aid of the non-racial sporting organizations and the oppressed black majority. So today, I salute the leaders and members of your remarkable movement on your 100th anniversary, congratulate you on your success in keeping it going under the very difficult conditions you have encountered, and applaud your recent efforts to revitalize and strengthen it.

Today, the spirit and determination of your movement is needed more than ever before, as global economic crises, neo-liberal cutbacks to publicly available sport and recreation and other changes make it harder than ever for the majority of people to participate in healthy sport and physical activity. At the same time, hatred, violence and outright war divide many societies around the globe. Sport is not immune, as the frightening attacks on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Pakistan in 2009 and the Togo soccer team in Angola in 2010 make clear; moreover, racism and homophobic bullying still plague youth sport in many schools and communities. As we all know from personal experience, sport has and can contribute to intercultural understanding, the reconciliation of divided peoples and the affirmation of children and youth. But as the long history of workers’ sport illustrates, it is never automatic. It requires principled, disciplined, persistent effort.

Sport has always had a complex, contradictory relationship to social conflict. For much of human history, athletic competitions and tests of physical strength have been directly linked to aggression, conquest and subordination. Among the classical Greeks, whose sacred games have given us the paradigm of the modern Olympics, in the words of Homer, 'athletics were preparation for war, war preparation for athletics'. The skills and ideology of predatory masculinity that they glorified prepared men for combat and contributed to the system of
misogynist slavery that enabled the Greek city states to prosper. The same could be said about
the aristocratic jousts and tournaments of the feudal period: the technologies, organizations and
values they stimulated were inextricably bound up with medieval warfare and the process of
creating and policing the class, gender, ethnic and religious hierarchies of those societies.

In the modern era, there has been a concerted, ongoing effort to reduce the violence of
sports, in step with the larger process that sociologist Norbert Elias called the 'civilizing process'.
Most sports today are significantly less violent and safer than their antecedents a century ago.
But they still encourage a martial spirit, exploit the ideologies of difference and inequality, and
fuel the passions of war. During World War One, sporting events in many countries were sites of
intense propaganda and were used to recruit soldiers and workers to the war effort; in North
America, the symbolic ties of sport to the military are renewed in the ceremonies of major
championships to this day. Sport also continues to contribute to other discourses of hatred and
subordination, especially misogyny and racism. In the former Yugoslavia, the Red Star Belgrade
football fans' organization drove the militant Serbian nationalism that contributed to the
genocidal civil war.

Yet during each of these same periods, sports have also occasioned truce and diplomacy.
The best known instance is the 'Olympic truce' of classical antiquity, which sought to ensure safe
passage for athletes and spectators travelling to the Olympic Games, and prohibited the invasion
of Elis, the city state where Olympia was located, during the period of the Games. Then as now,
the Olympics were a site of backroom diplomacy between the assembled elites. In the late
nineteenth century, one of Pierre de Coubertin’s goals in creating the IOC’s Olympic Games was
to spur the formation of international networks that would generate a critical mass of
intercultural tolerance that would serve as a brake on war. Coubertin was deeply influenced by
the international peace movement. In the first winter of World War One, the shared love of
football on both sides of the trenches contributed to the spontaneous 'Christmas truce' between
German, British and French troops that has been documented so movingly by the In Flanders
Fields Museum in Ypres. Many of the soldiers involved had learned to play in amateur or
socialist clubs that promoted sport as a means of enhancing youth education and reducing social
conflict.

Yet the ‘Christmas truce’ of 1914 was quickly suppressed, and millions more lost their
lives before the Armistice of 1918. Today, despite the modern Olympic Truce proclaimed by the
IOC and the United Nations in the build-up to every Olympic and Winter Olympic Games, wars,
state assaults upon their own citizens and non-state violence against innocents continue. Such are
the world’s tensions that major sports events like the Olympics must be protected by expensive,
heavy-handed surveillance and security. It is clear that sport cannot stop a war that has already
broken out, nor easily protect itself from threats emanating from global conflicts. Sport cannot
solve the world’s problems by acting alone.

But we should not be discouraged, either about the prospects for peace or the contribution
sport can make. We all have experienced the ways in sport can forge friendships across the
divides of culture, nationality, sexuality and religion. I believe that in partnership with other
interventions, especially in education, health and human rights, sport can do more good than
harm. It can contribute to more inclusive and beneficial social development, which in turn can
reduce social tensions and the trigger points for intergroup violence and war. On this historic
occasion, it is fitting that we consider what can all of us do to bring the power of sport to the
tasks of social understanding and development.
The most effective efforts currently underway today to bring about reconciliation and social development through sport are (1) those educational programs, **within organized sport**, to combat prejudice and discrimination and to affirm the humanity of all participants and spectators; and (2) those programs conducted under the banner of Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) to bring sport and healthy physical activity to those not currently engaged in organized sports, especially the most disadvantaged members of the global community. Each of these initiatives can be strengthened.

It goes without saying that progressive sports organizations today promote ethical, inclusive sport through codes of conduct, leadership training and credentialing, and educational campaigns for members and the public. CSIT has always been in the forefront of these efforts and is a member of the European Fair Play Movement. But we must remember how recent these efforts are—it was only a generation ago that racist, sexist and homophobic slurs and chants were accepted without question in mainstream sport—and how vital they remain in this divisive world. I applaud the various anti-racism, anti-bullying and anti-homophobia campaigns conducted by a growing number of sports organizations. They prevent the mobilization of sport for hatred and violence. They have the instructional effect of saying that if you want to be a valued member of the sporting community, you must include and stand up for all participants and spectators, and take leadership in eradicating discrimination. Yet there is still too much gender-based violence, overt racism and as the current debate about the rights of LGBITIQ in Sochi illustrates, open homophobia in sport. The gripping scoreboard messages, arm-patches and classroom posters of equity campaigns need to be followed up by ongoing, interpersonal engagement. In my experience, the only way you can bring those steeped in the culture of ‘hate the other’ to embrace genuine equity is to bring them into active discussion and peaceful
encounters with those whom they have been taught to ridicule or demonize. The good news is that sport presents such many opportunities—competitions involving athletes and their supporters from different backgrounds and persuasions—over and over again. In our multi-cultural societies, we don’t have to take teams to another country to experience difference. But we need to be much more creative about how we organize and frame those encounters with those from other teams. There will always be tension between competitors but sports should be based upon our shared humanity.

The movement known as Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) can also make an important contribution. SDP brings the appeal and methodologies of sport to some of the most difficult tasks of the contemporary world, including the realization of the UN's Millennium Development Goals and the stabilization and rebuilding of war-torn societies. SDP seeks to enhance basic education, child and maternal health, gender equality, preventive education about HIV/AIDS and reconciliation and peace-building, especially in the Global South. Perhaps the best known example is the athlete-led NGO Right to Play, which enriches the lives of children and youth in refugee camps in some 22 countries through sport. But there are many others. In the former Yugoslavia, the Caucasus and the Middle East, the Open Fun Football Schools bring children and youth from divided communities together in common activities in an effort to overcome prejudice and discrimination and teach tolerance, respect and the principle of equality. In west African countries torn by civil war, UNICEF coordinates a number of non-governmental organizations that uses sport as part of the very difficult task of re-integrating child soldiers into 'normal' or civil society, through education and the values of rule- and respect-based sport. Some of the very best programs are South-to-South. The Nairobi-based Mathara Youth Sports Association, which encourages education and environmental responsibility through soccer,
especially for girls and young women, sends teams of leaders throughout eastern and southern Africa. I know that several unions within CSIT conduct your own projects.

SDP grew out of the changed conditions created by the end of the Cold War, especially the triumph of neo-liberal ideas and the boost they brought to individual entrepreneurship. With the simultaneous fall of apartheid, southern African sports leaders who previously asked activists to say ‘no’ to sporting links with South Africa asked us to say ‘yes’ to sport development and to help the new post-apartheid South Africa and the ‘front-line’ states of southern Africa (which had also been significantly damaged by the long struggle) to create accessible and inclusive sports systems. A new generation of athlete leaders sought to bring the benefits of what they knew best—sports—to those whose lives had been devastated by war, disease and famine.

Initially, the new programs focused on sport development, the creation and strengthening of opportunities for high performance training and competition, and capacity building within national sports administration. Most sport programs of international assistance today, such as the IOC’s Olympic Solidarity, still concentrate on sport development. But some sport leaders began to realize that if sport development was to reach more than a tiny group of outstanding athletes, it could not occur without broad social development, that is, it is impossible to create safe, sustainable organized sport for large numbers of children and youth without safe and supportive social conditions in the society as a whole. So they turned their attention to how sport could address the most urgent challenges facing developing societies, such as the pandemic of HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. Once that realization occurred, it became a short step to uncouple programs from the expectation that participation in sport necessarily lead to organized competition and to focus instead on how sport could address local needs. The penny dropped for me when the Canadian staff on the ground in Zimbabwe in a program I was involved with
determined that an aerobics program for pregnant and lactating mothers—not the basketball they had been sent for—was the most appropriate program they could begin. While none of the participants ever intended to participate in organized competition, the program quickly became a valued resource for infant and maternal health.

SDP can enable more stable, peaceful societies. The research indicates that when coordinated with other opportunities, programs may contribute to

- The inclusion of children and youth from different backgrounds in schools and community organizations, especially in post-conflict societies
- School retention, academic achievement and school safety
- Character-building, including ethical behaviour, empathy, and leadership, especially among girls and women
- Reduced youth crime, with its devastating long-term consequences, through diversionary rehabilitation and gateway programs

There is evidence that sports programs are particularly effective in reaching young people who are not attracted by other programs, and in building inter-generational trust and cooperation, particularly within families. While difficult to measure, these outcomes contribute poverty reduction, basic education and gender equality.

Moreover, when sport helps former child combatants re-integrate into West African society, or brings children together from all sides of the complex religious divides in the Middle East or Ireland, or gives families in refugee camps facing an uncertain future something to cheer about, it enables them to take their own steps towards rebuilding their societies. Given that sport is a collective cultural creation, it may provide opportunities for people on all sides to work
together to make an event happen and gradually develop understanding and trust. Such networks or ‘webs’ of relationships contribute to social stability.

Today, the struggle to realize equitable, harmonious, peaceful, democratic societies is more complex and demanding than ever before. There are no ‘quick fixes’ and what may be achieved at the level of national and international policy still needs to be realized in the day-to-day practices of societies on the ground, and vice versa. Sport organizations and their members can play an important role, especially in the way that they conduct their everyday activities, and in the efforts they make to bring the joys and benefits of sport and physical activity to those who do not currently enjoy opportunities. The most important thing is to ensure that sports ‘do no harm’ and that they no longer provide a feeding ground for hatreds and bigotry. Given its long and proud history as an advocate of socially committed sport, I know that the workers’ sport movement will continue to provide an example of leadership for the world. I wish you all the very best in your second century.