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Prime Minister
Gro Harlem Brundtland

DINNER SPEECH ON THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT TO NORWAY OF MEMBERS
OF THE IOC STUDY AND EVALUATION COMMISSION

Mr. Chairman,
Honoured IOC members,
Dear guests,

It is a great pleasure for the Norwegian Government to have the IOC Study and Evaluation Commission as our guests this evening on the occasion of your visit to Lillehammer and to Norway.

The IOC has given you the important task of investigating conditions in those towns and countries that are candidates for the 1994 Winter Olympic Games. I hope that you have not only formed a positive impression of Lillehammer's qualities as a potential future arranger of the Winter Olympics, but that you will also leave Norway with good memories of our country.

35 years have passed since Oslo arranged the Winter Olympic Games in 1952. By 1992, Winter Olympics will subsequently have been arranged 6 times in Continental Europe, once in Japan, and 3 times in North America. Given the strong position winter sports enjoy in Scandinavia, and the traditionally unmodest medal harvest of Scandinavians at Winter Olympics, we now consider it a timely and positive challenge for our country to be given the task of arranging the 1994 Winter Olympic event.

We realize that Norway and Lillehammer are up against fierce competition, fair, but tough, as the Olympic competitions themselves. Your job, as judges of the great final, will be difficult and important. You will be judges of an event where there will be awarded no silver or bronze medals.

Lillehammer is well prepared for this competition. The candidate tried very hard in the last round and is thus not without Olympic experience. It has come back in excellent shape and with the highest ambitions. Lillehammer has applied for the Winter Games in 1994 because the town and this country as a whole know we can make a worthy contribution to the Olympic movement. A nation of sports enthusiasts will support us and ensure that the games are conducted in proper, sportmanlike and friendly manner. The best of the collective Norwegian experience in arranging winter sports events will be unfolded if we get this opportunity.

As you know, winter sports - and especially skiing - have long traditions in Norway. In a sparsely populated country with long winters with stable snow conditions, mastering the art of skiing has historically been viewed as a necessity. Since ancient times, skis have been a tool for facilitating communication between people.

Rock carvings indicate that people were skiing in Norway four thousand years ago. Our ancient sagas are full of accounts of great achievements on skis. Mastery of the art of skiing was in itself a symbol of strength and status among people. Skiing as a sport meant so much to the Vikings that they had their own ski god, Ull, and their own ski goddess, Skade.

As far back as 1786 the Norwegian Government, for reasons of defence, awarded prizes to particularly good skiers. As you can see, it is a historic truth that the cradle of the sport of skiing stood precisely in Norway.

Consequently it is only natural that it was Norwegians who introduced skiing to Continental Europe, just as Norwegian emigrants took the sport to the United States in the early part

of the last century. I might mention as an example the legendary Norwegian Snowshoe-Thompson who for a period of 20 years in the middle of the last century, managed to maintain a postal route across the grim mountain landscape of the Sierra Nevada on skis.

I can assure you that the means of communication which Lillehammer and Norway intend to offer are of a slightly more sophisticated and comfortable nature.

Honoured IOC members, I hope, of course, that you share our opinion that conditions at Lillehammer are excellently suited for winter sports. The area has an abundance of snow, favourable climatic and wind conditions, and steady temperatures throughout the winter. Particular care will be taken to meet the demands of the alpine ski community. The indoor competitions, such as figure skating and ice-hockey, will enjoy the most excellent facilities. And perhaps most importantly, we want competitors, leaders, staff, and spectators, as well as the press, to enjoy themselves.

I know that the Minister of Cultural Affairs, Mr. Hallvard Bakke, has given you an account of the financial obligations assumed by the Norwegian authorities in connection with Lillehammer's Olympic plans. Allow me therefore to ensure you that the Norwegian Government is determined to carry out all the necessary measures to make Lillehammer a worthy arranger of the Olympic Games, and we regard it as a national task to fulfil the obligations the IOC places upon an Olympic candidate.

Thank you all for coming to Norway. We hope very much to welcome you back.

With these words I propose a toast to the health of our honoured IOC guests and to the Olympic movement.