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THOMAS BACH ELECTED HONORARY IOC PRESIDENT FOR LIFE



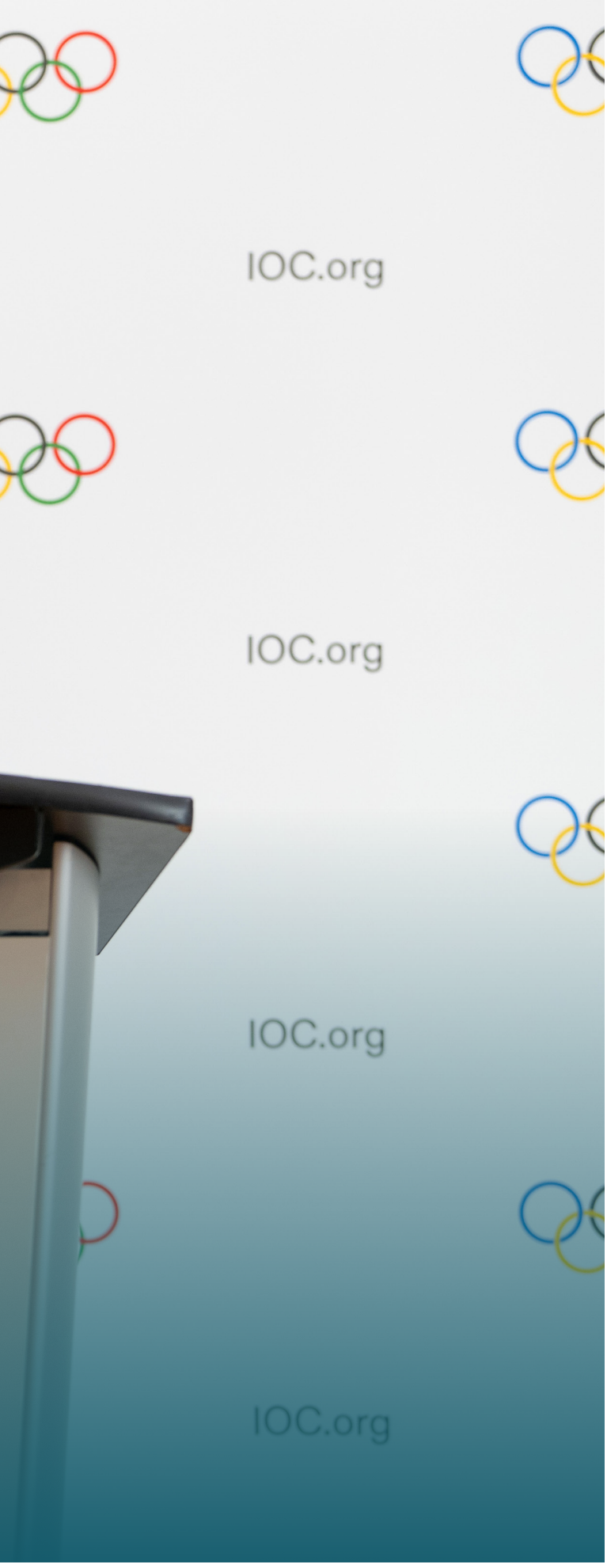
KIRSTY COVENTRY

ELECTED IOC PRESIDENT



ELECTION

KIRSTY COVENTRY ELECTED IOC PRESIDENT



On Thursday, 20 March 2025, Zimbabwe's Kristy COVENTRY was elected IOC President after the first round of voting during the 144th IOC Session in Costa Navarino, Greece. She thus becomes the 10th IOC President, the first African and first woman to take the helm of the supreme governing body of the global Olympic and Sports Movement.

Her election has been unanimously acclaimed as a giant historic step forward and a proud day for sportsmen and women and Olympians the world over.

Zimbabwe's current Sports Minister won an absolute majority of votes against her six challengers. "***This is an extraordinary moment. As a nine-year old girl, I never thought I'd be standing up here one day...,***" she said, addressing IOC members for the first time following her election as IOC President.

The IOC President elect, who has had a meteoric rise, succeeds Germany's Thomas BACH, elected honorary IOC President for life.

At the luxurious Costa Navarino seaside resort overlooking the Ionian Sea, one round of voting was enough for the seven-time Olympic swimming medallist to carry the day.

Always a pioneer, the IOC is opening a new chapter, and this will be embodied by Kirsty Coventry. IOC members voted her overwhelmingly,



given that the 41-year-old had an absolute majority in the first round against her six challengers. It is also emblematic for the former swimming legend: on 24 June, she will become the first woman and first African to lead the IOC, a powerful message of parity and universality, two topical issues for the Olympic Movement.

With many candidates in the run, it was expected that the election to the IOC presidency would be tough. Nevertheless, her vision was so convincing unifying that the suspense was broken in the first round. She won 49 votes out of 97, against 28 for Juan ANTONIO SAMARANCH Jr, who had high ambitions, given his longevity and knowledge of the IOC, and 8 for Sebastian COE, who defended his ideas to the end on social media. David LAPPARTIENT (4), Morinari WATANABE (4), Johan ELIASCH (2) and Prince FEISAL (2) rounded off the list. This clear-cut and seamless victory is crystal clear, giving Kirsty COVENTRY a boost of legitimacy. This creates the most enabling conditions for the kickoff of her tenure on 24 June.

It can properly be claimed that her election ends the process of increasing feminisation of the Olympic world: today, there are 43 female IOC members (around 40%), a number that has doubled since 2013. IOC Commissions have also become gender equal and, for the first time on the field, there were as many female competitors as male competitors at the Olympic Games Paris 2024.

Overwhelmed with emotion, the IOC President elect stated: "***It's like when I won my first Olympic medal in 2004, it's a bit unreal. The young girl who started swimming in Zimbabwe so many years ago could never have dreamed of this moment. I am particularly proud to be the first female IOC President and the first from Africa. I hope this will inspire many people. Glass ceilings have been broken today, and I am fully aware of my responsibilities as a role model. Sport has the unparalleled power to unite, inspire and create opportunities for all, and I am committed to ensuring that we harness this power to the fullest. Together with the entire Olympic family, including our athletes, fans and sponsors, we will build on our strong foundations, innovate and uphold the values of friendship, excellence and respect...***"

Urging all her peers to roll up their sleeves, she declared: "***This is not just a huge honour, but it's also a reminder of my commitment to every single one of you that I will lead this organisation with so much pride, with the values at the core and I will make all of you very, very proud, and hopefully extremely confident with the choice you've taken today, thank you from the bottom of my heart. Now, we've got some work to do, together. This has been an incredible race and it made us better, made us a stronger Movement***."



Kirsty COVENTRY will definitely give a new, younger and more universal image to the IOC. On the other hand, she will not shake up the organisation in terms of ideas or projects. The Zimbabwean will take the cue from the outgoing President, Thomas BACH, and continue to support the IOC's modernisation process across the board.

In his congratulatory message following the election, Thomas BACH said: "***Congratulations to Kirsty COVENTRY on her election***



as the 10th IOC President. I warmly welcome the decision of the IOC Members and look forward to strong cooperation, particularly during the transition period. There is no doubt that the future of our Olympic Movement is bright and that the values we stand for will continue to guide us through the years to come."

Also congratulating the seven-time Olympic titleholder was the, ANOCA President Mustapha BERRAF, who highlighted the exceptional career

of this top-level athlete: "***Your recent election as IOC President does us all proud, especially as you are not only the first woman, but also the first African to be elected to this high post of responsibility in the field of sport and Olympism.***

The entire ANOCA Executive Committee thus joins me to congratulate you on this landmark achievement, a wonderful news that has overwhelmed the African Olympic and Sports Movement.

Your exceptional track record as an elite athlete, your outstanding contribution to sports governance in Africa and the world and your sheer talent were on display on 20 March 2025. This date marks a milestone for the African continent: it is historic for African youths, and historic to the world at large. We are deeply delighted, and words alone cannot express our immense satisfaction.

The Almighty God has uplifted you, and may He continue to take you to higher heights as you strive to achieve your goals. We wish you every success in the implementation of your actions as set out in your action plan, which highlights the Olympic values of solidarity, sharing and love."

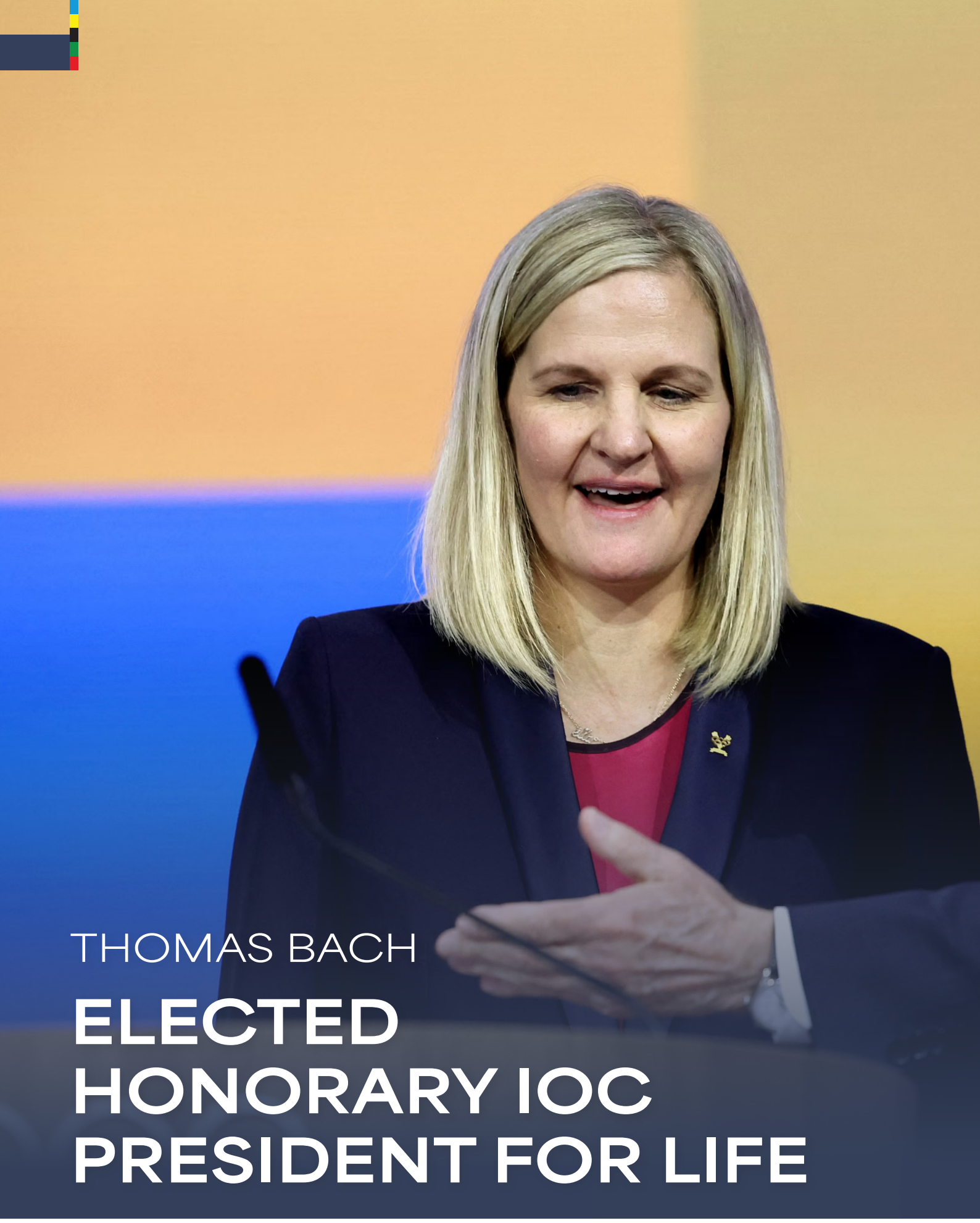
The IOC President elect campaigned on her desire to create more opportunities for athletes, especially by building on existing programmes and Olympic Solidarity scholarships. Kirsty COVENTRY also laid emphasis



on democracy and the need to take all points of view into account, giving greater weight to members and commissions. In her manifesto, she pledged, if she were elected, to "***bring all members together to assess the current state of the Olympic Movement and collaboratively define short, medium and long-term objectives.***"

She will succeed Thomas BACH, the 9th IOC President, whose 12-year term will officially end on Monday 23 June 2025.

The IOC President is elected by IOC members by secret ballot for an eight-year term, with the possibility of a second four-year term.



THOMAS BACH

ELECTED HONORARY IOC PRESIDENT FOR LIFE



Members attending the 144th IOC Session unanimously acclaimed the election of the outgoing President of the Olympic Movement to this prestigious position as they rose in a standing ovation, in recognition of his commitment to the IOC, of which he has been a member for 34 years and which he headed for 12 years. He will take up his new duties when his term as IOC President ends on 23 June 2025.

Thomas BACH was elected Honorary IOC President for Life on 19 March 2025. IOC Members unanimously acclaimed the proposal as they rose in a standing ovation after the proposal was made to the 144th IOC Session by IOC First Vice President, Nicole HOEVERTSZ, on behalf of the IOC Executive Board in Olympia (Costa Navarino), Greece. Just before that, the IOC Session was informed about the huge success of the Olympic Agenda reforms, which defined Thomas BACH's tenure.

As a matter of fact, while proposing Thomas BACH for to election as Honorary President for Life, Nicole HOEVERTSZ dwelled on his commitment to the Olympic Movement. In her paper presented to IOC members attending the 144th Session in Costa Navarino, Greece, she noted: "***Under President Thomas BACH's visionary leadership, the Olympic Agenda has been successfully implemented over the***



years, which certainly has been no small feat. By so doing, we could say that, in essence, President Thomas BACH has played a crucial role in modernising the Olympic Movement and ensuring its relevance in the 21st century. Mr President and Executive Board colleagues, please allow me to address myself to the IOC members who are present at this 144th Session."

Mrs HOEVERTSZ then continued: *"Thomas BACH has truly served our organisation, and he has done so as a Member for no less than 34 years. During the said period of membership, he served as a member of the Executive Board and as Vice President. He was a member of several important Commissions and is credited as being a member of the first IOC Athletes' Commission when it was created at the Session held in Baden-Baden in 1981. For the past 12 years, President Thomas BACH has successfully navigated the complex landscape of global sports with remarkable resilience and foresight. He championed Olympic Agendas 2020 and 2020+5, and the Olympic AI Agenda, driving crucial reforms that have shaped the future of the Games and of the Olympic Movement. His leadership has been instrumental in facing challenging geopolitical situations, promoting gender equality, advancing sustainable initiatives, dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthening the fight against doping."*

Mrs HOEVERTSZ went on to add that: "***His work to promote e-sports and the further digitalisation of the Olympic Games must be recognised. He demonstrated a commitment to athletes' welfare and the protection of athletes. President BACH frequently emphasises the enduring relevance of Pierre de COUBERTIN's vision and draws clear inspiration from the founder of the modern Olympic Games. He consistently highlights COUBERTIN's belief that sport transcends national boundaries and serves as a powerful instrument for fostering harmony among peoples. His dedication to the Olympic values has inspired generations of athletes and instilled a sense of hope and possibility in communities around the world. He leaves an indelible mark on the Olympic Movement, thereby strengthening its foundation for generations to come***."

Mrs HOEVERTSZ then concluded: "***I am confident that I speak on behalf of you all, and the entire Olympic community, when I express our deepest gratitude for President Thomas BACH's tireless dedication and unwavering commitment. His passion for sport and his genuine concern for the well-being of athletes have been evident in every single decision he made. His ability to bring people together, even in times of conflict, is testimony to his exceptional leadership. As President BACH embarks on a new chapter in his life, we wish him all the best in all***





the new and exciting experiences that lie ahead. May the spirit of the Olympic gods continue to bless and guide you, dear President, and may your legacy inspire us all to strive for excellence and embrace the power of sport to unite the world. Thank you, President BACH, for the extraordinary services rendered to our organisation."

Following this proposal, several IOC Members lavished praise on Thomas BACH and his monumental achievements as IOC President:

Anant SINGH, IOC Member in South Africa:

"*We have talked a lot about leadership over the years and I have had the honour of being led by you. The leadership for which we both have great admiration is that of Nelson MANDELA. You have adopted many of the ideals and objectives found in the way he led, and I have observed this during my seven years here. It has been a great source of inspiration to be led by you*."

Spyros CAPRALOS, IOC Member in Greece and President of the European Olympic Committees (EOC):

"*I would also like to say that I was there when your term started in Buenos Aires. I know the difficulties involved in having to stage Olympic Winter Games only six months after your election in Buenos Aires. Later on, you set the goals and milestones*

of what we needed to do with the Olympic Agendas, and that was always based on values, something that we so badly needed in our organisation. You did a lot, always keeping in mind that, at the heart of the Games, there is sport and also giving the athletes more authority and helping them to do more. Then, of course, for the organisers trying to reduce the cost of the Games."

Neven Ilic, IOC member from Chili and CEO of Panam Sports:

"I admire many things in you, and I am grateful for many things. Those of us who are presidents of Continental Associations and NOCs value the closeness of their relationship with you. You always made me feel incredibly welcome. You were always there at the Pan American Games, you made us feel relevant. There are many things one looks for in a great leader. Your efforts and conviction were so significant. During the pandemic, athletes who had been preparing for more than four years could have had their dreams destroyed, but thanks to your conviction and efforts, they were able to compete in Tokyo and Beijing. You have had to defend values; even when there could have been consequences for you, you always defended our values and did what you thought was right. Our organisation fought for these convictions. On behalf of my continent, thank you for your leadership. We hope that whatever you your future endeavours, you will be successful,".

Luis ALBERTO MORENO, IOC Member from Colombia:

"I would like to draw the attention of all my colleagues to another dimension: your diplomatic skills that I have had the privilege of seeing with my own eyes. Having spent a good part of my life in multilateral institutions, it is not easy to reach a consensus on ideas. I saw how you were able to listen. At the end of the day, diplomacy is about building bridges where there are none. It reminds me of what Gandhi said:



"First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, and finally you win." Mr President, you have won for all of us. Thank you very much,"

Mustapha BERRAF, IOC Member from Algeria and ANOCA President:

"*It's a bit difficult after what has just been said, and it's with a lot of emotion that I speak to you today. I am really touched. On behalf of all African colleagues, we made this proposal, and I am very happy that it has come to fruition today. We sincerely thank you from the bottom of our hearts, Mr Thomas BACH, for all the efforts you have made on behalf of Africa, our continent, and for the invaluable support you have provided. Today, we can affirm that the situation has been addressed. The athletes are in good hands and, on behalf of the entire African Sports and Olympic Movement, I would like to express our deepest gratitude and most sincere wishes for your happiness. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts, thank you very much.*"

Accepting his election, and visibly moved, Thomas BACH responded: "*Dear friends and colleagues, I was elected President 12 years ago, my first words were "ouf!", and the situation is almost the same today. I am truly overwhelmed and, of course, extremely grateful for all the kind words you have addressed to me and for the great honour you have bestowed on me for electing me as your honorary President. However, I am very much humbled for two reasons. First, as I've always said before, it's not what we've seen here, it's not the work of one man. It's the work and achievements of all of us. Each and every one of you has contributed in your own way to this success. Each and every one of you has contributed to the unity we have finally achieved, and without which nothing would have been possible*."

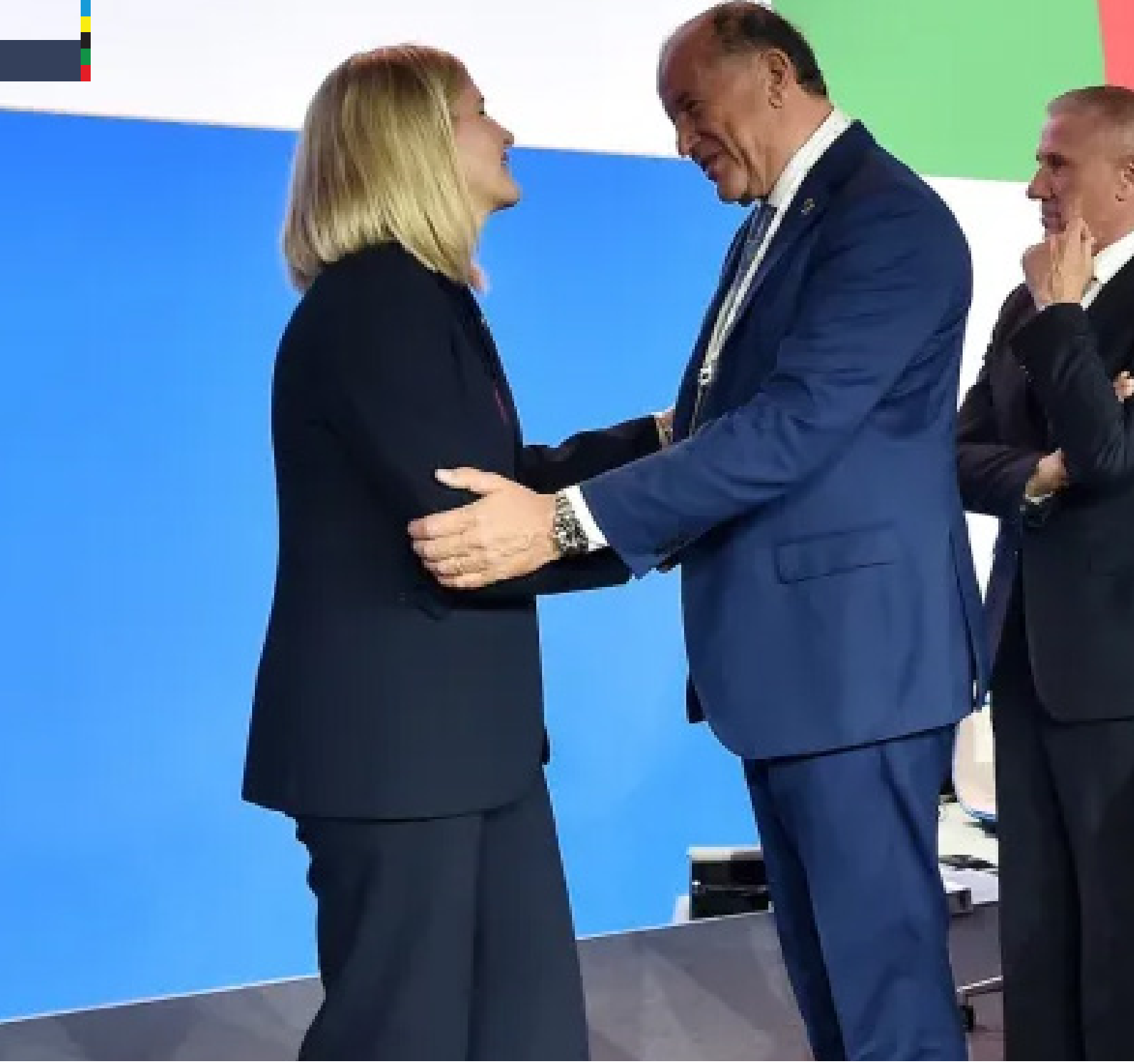


President Thomas BACH further said: "*If we had not been united in our commitment to our values,*



God knows where we would have been today. That's why I was able to respond to all the kind words you have addressed to me. As I respond to them with all gratitude, I'm also saying that we should never forget that the Olympic Movement is much bigger than us. We can be grateful, and I have always been grateful for the privilege of working within the Olympic Movement. As some of you have mentioned, these 12 years have been so difficult, and you have made sacrifices. As far as I'm concerned, I haven't made a single sacrifice in those 12 years."

He went on further in the following words: "*I am grateful that, after my career as an athlete, I have been able to continue living my passion for sport. I am grateful to you for allowing me to give back to sport what I received from the Olympic Movement. My gold medal changed my life and, with this mandate as IOC President, I have had the opportunity to help others change their lives. That's why you're looking at a very happy man, even if he doesn't reflect it at the moment. You see a very happy man because I'm grateful for the chance to give back what I*



received. I'm grateful to have given others this opportunity. I'm grateful to say that I've given this Olympic Movement everything I could give."

He then concluded: "***It is now time to put a new leadership in place, and it is up to you to choose the new President so that he or she can make the Olympic Movement shine even brighter than it does today, because we are in sport, and yesterday's successes can only be the foundations of tomorrow's successes. I wish us all every success. If the next President needs advice or support, she can reach out to me, even at midnight. I would be delighted to help. However, I can't guarantee to respond at that time. You know I like my eight hours of***



sleep and I also like to sleep in the morning, but I'll be ready at any time if someone needs my opinion. If not, I won't impose my opinion. I accept this vote from you as an honour, but there are more important things in life than honours. Friendship is one of them. Thank you very much."

Thomas BACH's election as Honorary IOC President for Life ended a 34-year career with the IOC, which he headed since 2013, the year he was elected as the ninth IOC President at the 125th Session in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Thomas BACH served his first eight-year term, before being re-elected, unchallenged, for a second four-year term in March 2021.

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