

**Comments for the Opening Ceremony of the
36th World Scout Conference, Thessaloniki, Greece, 15 July 2002**

by

Garnet de la Hunt

Chairman, World Scout Committee

World Organization of the Scout Movement

On behalf of the World Organization of the Scout Movement, I want to say that it is an honour and a pleasure to open the 36th World Scout Conference. I believe this will be a milestone for our Movement, and for Scouting in Greece.

Greece was among the first countries to establish Scouting - back in 1910 - and it is a founding member of the World Organization of the Scout Movement. Over the years, Greek Scouts and Greek Scout leaders have distinguished themselves not only in Greece, but also in our worldwide Movement.

In 1963, this country hosted the World Scout Jamboree in historic Marathon. This brought 14,000 Scouts to these beautiful shores. This week is the second time the World Scout Conference has been held in Greece. The first time was in 1963, when Scouting leaders from 53 countries met in Rhodes.

We've come a long way since then. We've grown from fewer than eight million Scouts to more than 28 million, in twice as many countries. It was soon after the Rhodes Conference that we officially recognized that we were no longer a "boy" Scout organization, and today most countries have boys and girls in Scouting.

Today we have 151 countries with National Scout Organizations, and this week we expect to welcome Cape Verde as a new member and to welcome back Ethiopia. The growth of Scouting really has been remarkable, especially in this past decade, after the collapse of communist governments. Scouting was born or re-established with an unbelievable fervour from within those countries. Some people who are here with us today kept the Scouting spirit alive and are passing it on to new generations in these countries.

We still have room to grow, as there are some 36 countries which have Scout organizations which one day may qualify for world membership. For the time being, there are only seven countries without any Scouting that we know of: Afghanistan, Andorra, People's Republic of China, Cuba, North Korea, Laos and Myanmar.

But we are not here this week to look back; we are here to plan our actions between now and our 100th birthday in 2007.

I look forward to a great week of work and achievement. From what I have seen so far, I think all of us will appreciate the excellent work of the Greek Scout Organizing Committee, and the warm hospitality of the people of Greece - especially here in Thessaloniki.

Thank you very much.

(4/7/02)

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by

Dr. Jacques Moreillon

Secretary General

World Organization of the Scout Movement

In this room we have the top leadership of more than 28 million Scouts around the world. This is a unique situation which no other voluntary youth organization can claim. It is also a very special responsibility for us. We are entrusted with providing life-building, non-formal education for the development of young people; development which will help them grow to be responsible citizens of their community, country and world. I don't just mean that they will be leaders of tomorrow, but that they will help make a better world today...and tomorrow.

Our goal - which we share with other non-formal education organizations - is to develop young people who are autonomous, supportive, responsible and committed.

We are gathered here for the "general assembly" of the Scouting world, to consider some important matters for our Movement. In 2007, we will mark our 100th anniversary, and the decisions taken here this week will be fundamental to improving and preparing us to face our second century as a stronger, more effective, more involved organization.

Here in Thessaloniki, we will carefully consider, and adopt, a Strategy for Scouting. It will be based on the Mission for Scouting which we adopted three years ago at our previous World Conference, and will be based upon our Vision for Scouting - which is also to be adopted here in Thessaloniki.

We see Scouting as an educational social force focused on achieving our mission to involve young people working together to develop their full potential, supported by adults who are willing and able to carry out their educational role.

Scouting needs to attract and retain more young people - especially adolescents - of both genders and coming from all segments of society.

We see Scouting as attractive to adults, women and men, in all cultures – a Movement through which they can make a significant contribution to society by working with young people.

These are some of our challenges, and our main task this week is to decide how we can meet them.

I thank the Government of the Republic of Greece, the Government and citizens of Thessaloniki, and, of course, the Scouts of Greece for making this Conference possible and productive - as well as very enjoyable in this beautiful city. Thank you.

(4/7/02)