Mr Deputy Director-General Getachew Engida,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

Four years have passed since the last Winter Olympic Games. A number of new sports appeared and have found new adepts, new records are set and more athletes compete around the World.

The ideas of Pierre de Coubertin, who initiated the revival of the Olympic Games at the edge of the 19th century, have proved their vitality. One of his most famous quotations recalls the main principle of the Games “Le succès n'est pas un but mais un moyen de viser plus haut”.

The Games have become something more than just a sporting competition. The joyful reunion of peoples, countries and continents, spirit of friendship and mutual comprehension, great emotional performances at opening and closing ceremonies – that is what the Olympic movement is today.

It is encouraging that nearly 6000 sportsmen and team members from more than 80 countries will participate in the 22nd Winter Games. A remarkable fact as well is that more than 50 country leaders will attend the opening ceremony of
the Sochi Games while the total amount never exceeded 10 at the previous Olympics.

The promotion of sports and the values of UNESCO are mutually complementary. The Organization has done a lot in this field and we are happy to be an irreplaceable part of its activities. We have achieved very prominent results in many spheres, especially in doping control.

It is significant that the Torch of the Olympic Games was officially handed over to the smiling UNESCO Director General Ms Irina Bokova as a sign of our cooperation and goodwill. We all have seen the joyful picture of this ceremony on the UNESCO web-site.

These Games are of unique importance to Russia. We remember the emotional enthusiasm of the Moscow Games of 1980, which were the 22nd Summer while the Games in Sochi are 22nd Winter Olympics. We were to keep it up.

The preparation process launched a series of structural changes in the Russian South. And we set big hopes on Sochi that looks absolutely different today. New pipelines, roads and power lines have been built. We have contributed greatly to the ecological well-being of the region. Compared to the figures of monitoring in 2007 the pollution of air in Sochi is reduced 3 times by 2014. New Olympic infrastructure and new means of transportation have less impact on the unique environment of Southern Russia.

Sochi is now a new base for the Russian sportmen with up-to-date facilities: unique ski-jumps, ice-hockey and skating rings.

And we have built a brand new mountain touristic cluster with spacious hotels that can accommodate more than 40 000 people. It will be used after the Games to increase the number of our guests both in summer and winter periods.
The most important is that all these newest infrastructural and sporting facilities will be available to new generations of young sportsmen, who will build the future victories and thus promote culture of sports, spirit of friendship and mutual understanding.

The Olympics cannot avoid attracting media from all over the world. For that purpose an advanced media infrastructure was created in Sochi. The Main Media Centre in the Olympic Park and the Mountain Media Centre in Krasnaya Polyana are ready to host journalists. About 15,000 media professionals are coming to Sochi for the Olympics. The Main Media Centre opened on January 7, 2014, a month before the Olympics, and will continue its work until March 17 when the Paralympic Games are over. From January 24 and throughout the Games the centre will work 24/7. Moreover an infrastructure designed for non-accredited journalists will be provided in the centre of Sochi. The Olympic Games gave a huge impulse to the development of television technology. The 2014 Winter Olympics will be broadcast in HD format with use of Ultra HD technology.

I would like to ensure you that there will be joyful, peaceful, and successful Olympic Games. We have enough experience in conducting multilateral events at very different levels from World Championship in Athletics to G-20 Summit held most recently. As you could have probably noticed we gained a lot of new experience and we are ready to share it with any country that is willing to organize an event on such scale.

I would like to remind you that Russia set a visa-free visiting procedure for the participants of the Games.
Let us wish all the best to the sportsmen and their teams at the Sochi Olympics.

Thank you for your attention!