



UIAA youth mark Olympic peace

As the flame in Beijing was extinguished on August 24, hundreds of young climbers from around the world lit torches on mountaintops to keep Olympic values alive.

"The emotions and feeling that we were gathering with our friends on different peaks in the world on the same day, same hour, it was really special," says Zdenka Mihelic from the UIAA Youth Commission.

In South Africa, Italy, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, Slovenia and Greece young climbers celebrated "Ekecheiria", the ancient Greeks' name for the peaceful period which reigned during the Olympic Games.

"I am very happy to see so many young climbers and mountaineers being inspired by the Olympic Games and its spirit of peace and co-operation and in their own way going faster, higher and stronger," says UIAA Youth Commission President Anne Arran.

In Greece local youth joined by climbers from South Korea, Spain, Italy and China ascended Mount Olympus (2,917 m) and lit a torch. The participants were favoured with sunny and warm weather and made contact with youth in other countries by mobile phone. This event was organised by the Hellenic Mountaineering and Climbing Federation and the Italian Alpine Club (CAI).

Fresh snow prevented Slovenian youth from ascending Triglav (2,864 m), the highest peak of Slovenia, as planned. Instead they decided to light torches on several mountaintops. "We are sending to all mountaineers, to all people and the whole world the message of peace, friends and friendship, love, respect, unity, joy and happiness," says Zdenka Mihelic, who herself ascended Mala Mojstrovka. "In the mountains there is peace, happiness and true friendships, in mountains all people are friends to all. Let's spread that friendship and peace from the mountains to the valleys and to all people."

The Alpine club Mercator ascended Mahavscek=Veliki Bogatin (2,008 m): "We were 25 young and a little bit less young, but we all felt young in our hearts," says leader Martin Slemensek.

The Alpine club Vuzenica did the two day tour 'Komna-Krn' with 12 participants, and lit the torch on the top of the beautiful peak of Krn (2,245 m). They also toasted to peace at the top with a glass of champagne. "We really hope that this would help and contribute at least a little bit to peace in whole world," they said.

The Alpine club of Novo mesto youth section ascended Hribarice (2,498 m) with 25 participants. One of the participants' message was : "The one who is going in the mountains, is also friendly in the valleys."



In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia young mountaineers climbed 10 peaks of more than 2,000m in good weather. The youngest participants were Maria, seven years old, and Christina, eight years old, who climbed Tumba Belasica. Tmobile Macedonia broadcasted pictures and messages from the groups on their web site.

In Ukraine a group of young climbers lit a symbolic torch on Mt.Goverla, 2058 m. "Our youth has responded to the call from UIAA Youth Commission and CAI of peace and friendship for the people of the whole world," says Alexander Zaidler from the Ukrainian Mountaineering Federation.

The Mountain Club of South Africa (MCSA) took the opportunity to turn "Ekecheiria" into an outreach initiative. They invited young participants who are normally not involved with climbing and mountaineering. These included young people from the Johannesburg Children's Home, other homes for disadvantaged children, a church youth group, a Soweto youth group, the Voortrekkers youth organisation and the Scouts.

"Everyone in South Africa seems to have had a ball! We had some 185 participants," says Jenny Paterson from the MCSA. Young people ascended Lion's Head and mountain tops in Magaliesberg and Helderberg. There was a special event for those under 8 years old, a climb to the top of the Bronberg.

Here are some of their messages: "Goeiedag/ Good Day to all in the world who are climbing mountains today to promote Olympic ideals of Friends & Peace! Greetings from the Glastonbury Ridge of the Bronberg ('Source Mountains') in South Africa from Lize (6), Zak (1,5) & parents." "Hi we are from Cape Town, we made it to Lions Head, yay finally! Remember friendship and peace." "Hi from Stellenboschberg in South Africa. Cloudy, cold and rain but kids are happy to be out!" "At our summit highest point in North West province. 100 youths plus and 20 adults. Well done to all."

In Italy 205 groups of young climbers, aged eight – 17, from the Italian Alpine Club (CAI) set out to light torches on an equal number of peaks – to symbolise each of the National Olympic Committees.

The purpose of all these events, which are part of the UIAA Global Youth Summit, was to keep the Olympic values and ideals alive, sending a message of peace and friendship around the world.



Here are the messages sent from the different countries taking part:

Greece:

In the morning of the 24th of August, an international youth group of 35 participants were on the summit of Mount Olympus, the highest and mythological mountain in Greece, to send a message of peace and friendship to all youth mountaineering people in the world.

The participants came from China (4), South Korea (4), Greece (11), Spain (5) and Italy (11).

In the Chinese group were a daughter and a son of members of the Chinese expedition to light the Olympic Torch on the summit of Mount Everest. Hao Wang is the daughter of the leader of this expedition.

The weather was incredibly nice for all of three days and this is special because there are always fogs and storms in the afternoon. I think that the Gods, who are living on the top understood that we are there to send a message of peace and they are good to us!

We lit the torch at 12.00 o'clock (Athens time) and all of the participants were very happy to be able to send a message that:

'THE MOUNTAINS DON'T DIVIDE BUT UNITE ALL PEOPLE WHO LOVE THEM'

Mount Olympus isn't easy to ascent because many mountaineers go on the summit and the rocks are polished. It is necessary to take care!

After the ascent we went to climb in Meteora with the guide Lazaros of the Hellenic Mountaineering Federation Federation. On the last day we went to visit Athens.

The Italian Alpine Club thanks very much the General Secretary Maya Fourioti and the Hellenic Mountaineering Federation for the help in the organization and the Chinese Mountaineering Association, the Korean Alpine Club, the Spain Federation of Mountaineering and the Hellenic Federation for their participation.

We also thank very much the Alpine Clubs of FYR of Macedonia, South Africa, Slovenia and Ukraine who participated in the event "205 Torches" where 2005 youth groups in CAI climbed a mountain in Italy to celebrate the 2008 Olympics in Beijing and the spirit of the Olympic movement.

Giampaolo Covelli, Event organizer for CAI and the UIAA Youth Commission

Italy:

The idea for the 205 Torches was born in a break during a UIAA trek in Valtellina (Lombardy, Italy), where both Giampaolo Covelli (an "old warrior" of CAI youth mountaineering) and Nicola Cavazzuti - just returned from a mountaineering experience with young people in Cordillera Blanca (Peru) - were sitting at a table and quietly conversing.



Despite their mountaineering experience, Giampaolo and Nicola are dedicated to the youth, using their personal education and the usefulness of group experiences. During their conversation, they also thought of the Olympic Games and the "Everest issue" - whether mountains separate or join people.

Giampaolo and Nicola also wondered whether "mountain peaks or crests should represent barriers or, on the contrary, represent places where people of different races, beliefs and cultures can join together and reach a special "dimension" of peace and solidarity".

Therefore the idea was born to unite 205 peaks symbolically, representative of youth from around the world and to link them together. This would send a message of peace and would be a reminder that the "Ekecheiria" torch (in ancient Greece, the name of the period of peace when wars were stopped for the Olympic Games) would not be extinguished August 24th, but would continue to light the faces of the young people on the top of Italian mountains, but not only in Italy, on many other peaks in other parts of the world too.

Slovenia

***The Alpine club Vuzenica** did the 2-days tour 'Komna-Krn' and lit the torch at the top of beautiful peak **Krn (2245 m)**. Almost the whole first day they had only rain, but luckily a sunny Sunday.*

Number of participants: 12, leader of the group: Branko Bricman:

We reached the top exactly at 12 o'clock. And at the top they lighted up the torch, actually two torches!

We are really happy, that lighted the torch and that we could take part in this huge action, so that we spread with the message of peace, friendship, unity and happiness forward.

Did we also contributed to this message for keeping, 'doing' peace, and we was thinking about the Great peace, which should widespread the whole world.

The opinions of our participants were: We really hope that this would help and contribute at least a little bit to peace in whole world!

We also toasted to peace at the top with a glass of champagne and descended to the mountain pasture Planina na Kraju and to the valley.

Happy, satisfied and also a little bit tired after such a nice trip, we drove to our homes of several hours (yes, we are home almost on the other side of Slovenia).

All the best, Branko Bricman

***The Alpine club Mercator** was on Mahavscek=Veliki Bogatin (2008 m) and on this top they lit the torch and a lot of little 'torches'.*

Number of participants: 25, the leader of the group: Martin Slemensek, the president of the Alpine club Mercator:



We were 25 young and a little bit less young, but we all felt young by our hearts.

*The **Alpine club of Novo mesto** was with their youth section (instead of Triglav/ because of the snow) on **Hribarice (2498 m)**.*

Number of participants: 25, the leaders of the group: Majda Markovic and Martin Luza:

The atmosphere was nice, friendly. At the top we lit the torch and our young participants read a message. We talked to each other about this action and the torch, meaning...

They were saying:

- More mountaineers -> more friendships;*
- The one, who is going in the mountains, is also friendly in the valleys;*
- Whenever I'm going to the mountains for the weekend, I'm the whole week in better mood and happy;*
- Super, that you remind us about this action and that we joined this international action;*
- Olympic Games are a big force, which is wide spreading the peace in the world;*
- More participants will be in this action Torch of peace and friendship, more people will know about this action, meaning and more success will be in the effort for peace and friendship;*
- I'm happy to join this action and that I participated in it.*

After rainy Saturday we had nice and sunny Sunday and Monday, wide views, nice gathering. We also saw also marmot and a herd of chamois, which rested on the rocks. Beautiful...

Majda

*UIAA youth commission member **Zdenka Mihelic** and 5 friends, mountaineers from 3 different Slovenian towns, were on the summit of Mala Mojstrovka (2332 m):*

Our mountaineers, also me and friends, were on several tops of Slovenia and: we all are sending to all mountaineers, to all people and the whole world – the message of peace, friends and friendship, love, respect, unity, joy and happiness... all that wishing between people, nations and countries.

We would like to tell in the message also, that mountains are gathering, mountains are places, where people, peace and thoughts meets.

In mountains are peace, happiness and true friendships, in mountains all people are friends to all. Let shake the hands and make the chain of friendship and peace around the world and carry + spread that friendship and peace from mountains also to the valleys and to all people.

At 12 o'clock in Athens time (in Slovenia it was 11 a.m.) I heard by mobile phone to our 4 groups from the Alpine clubs Vuzenica, Mercator, Novo mesto and Sostanj on the peaks: Mahavscek, Hribarice, Peca, Krn, all over 2000 m (the pictures of them I'll send after receiving them). And they were sending message of peace, friendship and happiness... (look up here). I know also, that some more groups were lighted the torch of peace and friendship.

We were having great weather, sun, clear day... And we lighted the torch, raised the banner of GYS and the Slovenian flag. The emotions and feeling that we are gathering to our friends on different peaks in the world in the same day, same hour, it was really special! Thanks to Paolo and CAI, who gave the idea that we were gathering yesterday together the mountains and friends.



South Africa

Everyone in SA seems to have had a ball! We had some 185 participants. Have to share with you that an additional Olympic Toddlers Meet was organised by Petro Grobler: Kids under 8 years are welcome [parents may accompany!] to climb to the top of the Bronberg [Glastonbury Ridge] near Zwavelpoort with Petro and Lize [11h30 for 12h00, and share in the Friendship and Peace Initiative.

Greetings from Helderberg in South Africa. Ice cold wind and rain coming now. But children are all smiling' – ULLI

'Hi we are from Cape town, we made it to 2 lions Head, yay finally! We are now sitting and enjoying the view. Hope the hike is going well. Remember friendship and peace.'

'Goeieday/Good Day to all in the world who are climbing mountains. Today to promote Olympic ideals of Friends & Peace! Greetings from Glastonbury Ridge of the Bronberg (Source Mountains) in South Africa on a lovely, warm mello day. Lize Bekker (6), Zak Burger (1.5) and parents, Magaliesberg Section of the Mountain Club of South Africa.

A bit late but hi from Stellenboschberg in SA. Cloudy, cold and rain but kids are happy to be out!. Jeanne

'At our summit highest point in North West province . 100 youths plus and 20 adults. Well done to all.'

Bad weather in Cape Town prevented the planned ascent up Table Mountain but instead, the groups went up the Lion's Head. CT is very strange! On one side of the mountain it could be bucketing with rain - and on the other you can have blue skies and sunshine!

Ukraine

On 24.08.08 at 12-00 on the higher point of Ukraine Mt.Goverla, 2058 m, the group of Ukrainian young climbers together with veterans have been lighted symbolical Olympic torch.

Our youth has respond to the call of UIAA YC and CAI to the peace and friendship of the people of all planet.

The leader of youth group was Vasily Zavalko, the known mountain guide from Ivano-Frankovsk city.