



## President's Message



April 11<sup>th</sup> 2005

### **SPECIAL MESSAGE OF THE ITF PRESIDENT FOR THE 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF TAEKWON-DO**

The 11<sup>th</sup> of April is a great day for all the practitioners of Taekwon-Do because, we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of this martial art. On April 11, 1955, the name «Tae Kwon Do» was officially adopted by the Committee, chaired by General Choi Hong Hi, to designate the new Korean martial art.

Since 1955, the three Korean words «tae», «kwon» and «do» have remained unchanged but the manner they are put together has evolved from Tae Kwon Do to Taekwon-Do and Taekwondo. General Choi has explained to me once when I was travelling with him in Europe that, at the beginning, the writing in three separate words was to ensure the correct pronunciation of each syllable. The words «tae» and «kwon» were put together in General Choi's book in 1968 to emphasize the need of balance between physical and moral or spiritual training (the Do). The World Taekwondo Federation (WTF) created in Seoul in 1973 has brought in one more way to write the name of our art: «Taekwondo». The aim is to emphasize the development of body and mind as one.

This special message is to present to you my observations about the past and my vision for the development of our art.

#### History

Since its beginnings, Taekwon-Do never ceased evolving. In the course of the years 1950 and 1960, in the context of the War in Korea and in Viet-Nam, Tae Kwon Do was practised mainly by soldiers. It was more of a method of combat to be used in addition to the traditional weapons. However, following the foundation of the ITF on March 22, 1966, which included nine countries, more civilians began to practice Taekwon-Do. Taekwon-Do became very popular thanks to the physical benefits it provides to those who practise it as well as to its techniques, which are particularly appreciated for their effectiveness and their beauty. Over the past of fifty years, Taekwon-Do is the martial art that has known the greatest progression! In 2000, the WTF presented Taekwondo as Olympic sport in Sydney.

The ITF is very proud of its position. It was the first international organization to govern Taekwon-Do. The founder of the ITF, late General Choi Hong Hi, spent his life to develop ITF technics as a scientific and logical system with more than 3000 movements, well known with 24 patterns and the sine waves. Taekwon-Do is an excellent personal discipline since it allows the development of a healthy spirit in a healthy body.

#### Unity

However, we note that the teaching program around the world and objectives to promote our art are unfortunately not uniform. Formerly, in the time of the Korean leaders, political influence was a current activity. This happened, in part because of the old authoritarian style which prevailed at that initial period. Although with time the way of doing things naturally changed. Several Koreans tried to control Taekwon-Do by this deplorable mean.

Taekwon-Do is a world inheritance in term of seniority. Today, Taekwon-Do gives way to its second generation of practitioners since their predecessors from the 50s and 60s are gradually taking the way of retirement. We witness the massive presence of non Koreans as leaders and as champions. Taekwon-Do is an art, a science and a mean of communication. There are no more secrets. The leaders and the practitioners do not have to be Korean anymore to practise the art of Taekwon-Do. Indeed, the movement has largely advanced. The art of Taekwon-Do is a world heritage!

### Development and commercial practice

The key to the development of the movement of Taekwon-Do is based on the implications of grandmasters, masters and instructors who teach the art. The success in the profession requires having management skills in addition to technical skills.



The interest of the public in enrolling in Taekwon-Do schools is no more based on the rank of the teacher as in the past. Members pay more attention to the quality of teaching and the services that the organization can offer them.

Until now, the dimension of the «Do» which makes Taekwon-Do a true martial art has not received all the attention it deserves. The teachers do not have all the tools to teach it. This is why we face situations where Taekwon-Do practitioners of very high rank go against fundamental principles of ethics.

Some individuals deliberately give themselves titles such as «supreme grandmaster» or «super grandchampion» whereas showing humility and modesty is an integral part of the moral values of our martial art. Moreover, excessive prices for black belt certificates, certificates by correspondence, discounted certificates or certificates allotted for political reasons do deplorably exist. However, they are being denounced by media and members so even if these gestures should be proscribed, it is obvious that such actions will end up collapsing. Today, the public is increasingly critical and informed. They are more able than in the past to recognize commercial exploitation in martial arts.

### Vision for the development of Taekwon-Do

I firmly believe that the great future of Taekwon-Do can be reached by the development of Taekwon-Do at its fullest, which means emphasizing each of the four facets: sport, martial art, way of life and tool for social development. As I have already wrote more specifically on this very important subject, I invite you to read My Speech at the Congress Meeting in Warsaw in 2003.

For the development of the techniques and the teaching of Taekwon-Do, I suggest that we favour scientific research on our art (physical and mental aspects). We need to listen to the expertise from our members and to the advices from qualified outsiders. This will pave the road for our progress on this matter.

Under no consideration whatsoever, must Taekwon-Do be used for political ends. It is of our duty to denounce those who try to exploit or benefit from Taekwon-Do in a way that is not respectful of the moral and ethical principles of Taekwon-Do.

The role of federations is to offer services and support to practitioners. Rather than to

federations must concentrate their efforts on working for those who really matter: their members.

In spite of the current confusion, ITF is eager to structure the organization of it. Our policy is to not yield to propaganda. We use as guidance our Constitution, our By-Laws and our policies. They are well-known to the public so that the ITF can be a democratic and a fair organization.

Taekwon-Do contributes to the development of the person (for example, self-esteem) as well as to the development of society. It provides a mean to train ourselves in overcoming important obstacles and problems. Given the ultimate goal of Taekwon-Do, it is essential to have competent people. Here is the challenge! Lead Taekwon-Do to serve humanity.



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