



United Nations  
DESA



Permanent Mission of Italy  
to the United Nations

# **Sports for Inclusive Development and Empowerment of persons with disabilities**

**10 June 2014 1:15 – 3:00 PM, UNHQs New York**

## ***Introduction***

There are approximately one billion persons with disabilities in the world, amounting to 15 per cent of the global population. Evidence suggests that persons with disabilities are disproportionately represented among the world's poor. Children with disabilities are less likely to attend school, which in turn decreases their chances of developing skills for future employment opportunities. This kind of exclusion, both economic and social, breaches the human rights of the world's largest minority and poses a major development challenge. Rich diverse societies that are truly inclusive will help strengthen the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and contribute to development for all its members.

Sports, being a universally popularity pursuit and the physical, social and economic developmental benefit associated with it, is an ideal tool to foster the inclusion and well-being of persons with disabilities. Sports reduce stigma and discrimination often associated with disability by highlighting their ability and talent, thereby transforming public attitudes towards persons with disabilities. Moreover, sports' unique ability to transcend linguistic, cultural and social barriers makes it an excellent catalyst for economic and social inclusion. Physical recreation is an enabler that has the power to change the lives of persons with disabilities in an equally profound way, by empowering them to realize their full potential and become agents of change in society. Through sports, persons with disabilities acquire vital social skills, develop independence, and become empowered to act as contributors in development.

## **Panel Discussion on Sports for Inclusive Development and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities**

The United Nations Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations, in close collaboration with the Office of the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Advisor on Sport for Development and Peace, will organise a Panel discussion on sports for inclusive development and empowerment of persons with disabilities, in conjunction of the 7<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The panel discussion contributes to the Conference, the implementation of the Outcome of the High Level Meeting on Disability and Development and ongoing global efforts to promote disability-inclusive development towards 2015 and beyond.

Expert panelists will use evidence based studies, personal experiences and their expertise to highlight the importance of sports in empowering persons with disabilities and their communities and contributing to inclusive societies and development for all.

In addition, the panelists from Governments, UN agencies, and civil society organizations, including organizations of persons with disabilities will discuss in what ways sports and accessible and universally designed technologies help in making a difference that not only positively affects the lives of millions of persons with disabilities but also benefits their wider societies.

***Purposes and objectives***

-To emphasize sports as an important catalyst and enabler; to explore its power in promoting inclusive development; to embrace diversity; and to foster empowerment of persons with disabilities.

-To raise awareness of Member States and other relevant stakeholders and call actions to further include disability in the international development agenda, including in internationally agreed development goals, through sport.

***Tentative programme***

***Opening and welcome addresses*** (United Nations and the Government of Italy)

*Panelists discussions ( moderated by UNDESA)*

- Mr. Wilfried Lemke, Secretary-General's Special Advisor on Sport for Development and Peace

- H.E Carlos Garcia, Permanent Representative and Ambassador of El Salvador to the United Nations

-Mr. Salvatore Cimmino (well-known Italian marathon swimmer with amputee. Nominee for 2011 and 2012 World Open Water Swimmer of the year)

-Ms. Zahra Nemati (first women Iranian Paralympics medallist)

-Professor Eugenio Guglielmelli (Campus Bio-Medico University)

and

- Mr. Joe Walsh, Vice President, International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA)

- Mr. Jared Niemeyer, Representative of Special Olympics International

- Mr. Eli Wolff, Inclusive Sports Initiative of Institute for Human Centered Design

***Q & A and interactive discussions***

***Closing***