

## 2005 International Year for Sport and Physical Education

*“Sport can play a role in improving the lives of individuals, not only individuals, I might add, but whole communities. I am convinced that the time is right to build on that understanding, to encourage governments, development agencies and communities to think how sport can be included more systematically in the plans to help children, particularly those living in the midst of poverty, disease and conflict.”*

*- Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General*

### Introduction

The United Nations General Assembly, in November 2003, proclaimed 2005 as the International Year of Sport and Physical Education (IYSPE). The aim is to encourage governments, sport-related organizations and athletes to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Many United Nations system entities, including UNDP and UNFIP, have formed relationships with sports organizations, such as the International Olympic Committee, sports federations, sport clubs and sport-related NGOs. These partnerships assist in the implementation of sport for peace development programmes as well as use sport as a tool to accomplish objectives from improving health and education to bridging cultural and ethnic divides.

Following the adoption of the IYSPE resolution, the Secretary-General urged Governments to give serious consideration to how sport could be more systematically included in plans to improve people's lives, especially young people who live in poverty, disease or conflict.

### The objectives for IYSPE 2005 are:

- Encourage governments to promote the role of sport and physical education for all when furthering their development programmes and policies, to advance health awareness, the spirit of achievement and cultural bridging to entrench collective values;
- Ensure that sport and physical education is included as a tool to contribute towards achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and the broader aims of development and peace;
- Promote collective work promoting sport and physical education-based opportunities for solidarity and cooperation in order to promote a culture of peace and social and gender equality and to advocate dialogue and harmony;
- Promote the recognition of the contribution sport and physical education towards economic and social development and encourage the building and restoration of sports infrastructures;
- Further promote sport and physical education, on the basis of locally assessed needs, as a means for health, education, social and cultural development;
- Strengthen cooperation and partnership between all actors, including family, school, clubs/leagues, local communities, youth sports associations and decision makers as well as the public and private sectors, in order to ensure complementarities and to make sport and physical education available to everyone;

### Why Use Sports as a Tool for Peace and Development?

The fundamental principles of sport -- respect for opponents and for rules, teamwork and fair play—have always been consistent with the principles of the United Nations and the Millennium Development Goals. Many UN organizations make regular use of the emotion-generating and mobilizing values of sport to raise awareness about issues - from improving health and education, to creating employment and promoting tolerance and respect for human rights.

Efforts to use sport for peace and development are replicable, effective and practical. Sport is about participation, inclusion and citizenship. Thus, it brings individuals and communities together, highlighting commonalities and bridging cultural and ethnic divides. Sport provides a forum to learn skills like discipline, confidence and leadership as well as teaches core principles like tolerance, cooperation and respect. When the positive aspects of sport are emphasized, it becomes a powerful vehicle through which the United Nations can work towards achieving the MDGs.

A task force of UN experts, in March 2003, submitted to the Secretary-General a report with recommendations for an increased role of sport to help achieve the MDGs by:

- Improving public health;
- Boosting education performance;
- Redressing discrimination against girls, the disabled and the elderly;
- Encouraging tolerance and respect for others;
- Bridging social, cultural and ethnic divisions;
- Supporting local economic development and job creation;
- Healing deep psychosocial wounds among victims of war and other abuse;
- More effective communication of the broad United Nations social agenda.

**Initiatives utilizing sport include:**

- The Danish Cross Cultures Project Association and UEFA support 185 “Open Fun Football Schools” for 37,000 children between 8 and 14 years of age as part of a project to nurture peaceful coexistence in countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro.
- In Sierra Leone, UNICEF has partnered with the NGO Right To Play, incorporating sport and play into its Community Based Reintegration Programme. Volunteers work with local communities building a network of coaches who implement sports programmes and give youth a sense of belonging through crucial community connections.
- In Zambia, in June 2003, government ministries, United Nations agencies and NGOs used the power of sport as a tool for a national campaign on the measles vaccines. This initiative combined large-scale advertising with one of the country’s football stars and local sports events.
- In Nairobi, Kenya, the German Population Fund and UN-Habitat ran a football league for homeless young people at risk from prostitution, violence and HIV/AIDS. By gathering over 1,000 street children, the tournaments offered an entry point for organizations to provide services and support.
- In Somalia, UNICEF and UNESCO promote peace in post-conflict regions through sport with programmes that both train youth in peaceful conflict resolution skills and provide resources supporting inter-district and regional sport-peace tournaments.
- In Albania, youth recreation centres provide counseling and assistance to job seekers;
- In Zambia, Botswana, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda, thousands of street children and orphans learn life skills while sharing in basketball, dance and other activities;
- In Brazil, young people in detention centres learn to channel their frustrations through judo and gymnastics;
- In Sierra Leone, sports offer an avenue for child soldiers to control aggression and build positive relationships with adults and peers.

## 2005 IYSPE Initiatives and Events

Many projects and initiatives planned for IYSPE 2005 focus on communications and advocacy, while others will employ the potential of sport to enhance existing programmes, especially those that are children- and youth- oriented. Many United Nations organizations, including UNDP, The International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), UNESCO and UNICEF, integrate sport into their work toward peace and development.

International initiatives and events to further awareness of the value of sport include:

- In Athens on August 2004, UNFIP (United Nations Foundation for International Partnerships), UNICEF and the international sports NGO Right to Play co-hosted a roundtable discussion titled "Common Ground: Sport as an Innovative Tool for Development and Peace," bringing together government representatives, United Nations leaders, Olympic representatives, elite athletes, representatives of international sporting federations and other members of the world of sport to ensure that sport becomes a recognized force in the global partnerships, highlight the humanitarian potential of sport and showcase the breadth of its applicability to the goals of peace and development.
- The fourth UNESCO conference of Ministers of Sports and Physical Education met in Athens in December 2004 to discuss, at the government level, the various development-related themes of sport in view of IYSPE 2005 in Athens.
- An international conference on Sport and Health will be held in January 2005 in Tunis.
- An international conference on Sport and Health will be held in Moscow in 2005.
- An international summit on Sport and the Environment will take place during the Aichi World Exhibit in Japan in July 2005.
- The second international conference on Sport and Development will close the IYSPE 2005 in Magglingen, Switzerland between 4 and 6 December 2005.