

10 January 2005

From the United Nations Office at Geneva UNOG

HIGHLIGHTS OF PRESS CONFERENCE ON CALL TO THE WORLD OF SPORT TO COORDINATED ACTION TO HELP THE TSUNAMI RELIEF EFFORT

Adolf Ogi, the Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, this afternoon gave a press conference at the Palais des Nations in Geneva in which he launched a call for coordinated action to the world of sport in response to the recent Indian Ocean tsunami on behalf of the UN system. Participating in the press conference were Jean-Pierre Seppey, the Director-General of the International Volleyball Federation which has announced a \$ 3 million contribution as the first response to Mr. Ogi's call; and James Rawley, Deputy Director of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Geneva and Director of the Office for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of UNDP.

Mr. Ogi noted that 2005 had been proclaimed the International Year of Sport and Physical Education. This year had started not with joy and sports as hoped for, but with chaos and desolation, with a tragedy unlike anything that the world had seen before. He said many might ask what sports had to do with humanitarian aid. However, since 26 December 2004, everyone had become concerned, creating a wave of solidarity in response to the wave of destruction in the Indian Ocean. This catastrophe which had plunged the world family into poverty and chaos and desolation was new proof of the role of the world of sport. Journalists had already seen spontaneous generous actions from Michael Schumacher and Real Madrid and the International Federation of Cricket.

"Today, before you and in the name of the United Nations agencies, I would like to launch an appeal for coordinated action to the sport world in response to this catastrophe. Working together and under the aegis of the United Nations will give back hope to the affected persons who have lost everything", Mr. Ogi said. He noted that there were three ways in which sport could render assistance to the victims of the tsunami. First, the world of sport could contribute financially to the reconstruction effort. Second, the world of sport could cooperate directly with sports associations in the affected region to give children and youth hope in the future. And third, the large number of volunteers who were so essential to sport could be made available to help in the long term.

Mr. Ogi noted that his appeal had already been heard and he was very proud to announce that the International Volleyball Federation had announced a \$ 3 million contribution. He thanked the Federation for its gift which would allow the UN system to start activities in the right direction and which he hoped would encourage others to give generously. He noted that on the ground, it was the United Nations Development Programme which evaluated the needs, prepared a list of priorities, and coordinated aid.

Mr. Ogi noted that there would be a large donor meeting in Geneva to discuss how the help for the tsunami victims would continue. Secretary-General Kofi Annan had last week launched the Flash Appeal which was expected to collect many hundreds of millions of dollars for the most urgent needs over the next six months. The United Nations leadership was well accepted by all and a coordinated approach had to be ensured. He thanked the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Office for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of UNDP for their assistance to help coordinate the aid offered by the world of sport.

Jean-Pierre Seppey, the Director-General of the International Volleyball Federation, said it was thanks to Mr. Ogi, the former President of the Swiss Confederation, that the Federation had decided to show the world that a sports institution could act together with the United Nations.

The International Volleyball Federation was the biggest sports federation in the world with 218 national federations and 35 million licensed players. Solidarity and social responsibility were not only empty words for the Federation, but they were based on the fundamentals of the institution and its constitution. It had eight development centres around the world and had already supported programmes around the world.

James Rawley, Deputy Director of the United Nations Development Programme in Geneva and Director of the Office for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of UNDP, said that he had just returned from Asia and could personally speak about the tremendous loss of life and destruction of property, schools and sports facilities in Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Indonesia. At the same time, he said there were hundreds of thousands of survivors who were making enormous efforts to recover their lives and livelihoods and who deserved solidarity. In this context, the generous support being provided today by the International Volleyball Federation was particularly relevant and timely and set an important example to the international community on the eve of tomorrow's meeting on the Flash Appeal. UNDP had already received an official request from the Maldives for sports equipment and for help to restore its playing fields and he was sure similar requests from Sri Lanka and Indonesia would follow. UNDP was grateful for this act of solidarity from the International Volleyball Federation.

A journalist asked if the International Federation of Football Associations or the Union of European Football Associations or others had taken any similar steps. In response, Mr. Ogi said that as far as he knew, the International Volleyball Federation was the first. He had heard that the International Olympic Committee was going to donate \$ 1 million, but he did not know whom the money would be given to.

In response to a follow-up question on whether the International Olympic Committee should have a larger role in today's launch, Mr. Ogi said "IOC is free to do what they want. We do not urge anyone. We just think it is important to coordinate and we want, as Mr. Seppey said, to put the money in the hands of professionals. For us, the professionals are UNDP".

Asked how all the generous aid from around the world would be accounted for, Mr. Rawley said that yesterday, Jan Egeland, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, had told journalists that with the support of Price Waterhouse, which had offered its support to the United Nations, a transparent accounting system would be set up to allow for the tracing of all the contributions from Governments and individuals to the United Nations.