

United Nations



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New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace
Bureau de New York pour le Sport au service du Développement et de la Paix

Media Advisory

Austria to host United Nations European Youth Leadership Summit on 19-21 June in Vienna

Focus on Sport and Culture to help achieve Millennium Development Goals

United Nations, New York, 30 May 2006 – The Government of Austria, which holds the Presidency of the European Union, will host the United Nations European Youth Leadership Summit on 19-21 June in Vienna, bringing together young leaders from across Europe to discuss ways to use the convening power of sport and culture to accelerate the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

The United Nations New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace is organizing the Summit as an inter-agency initiative on behalf of the entire United Nations system, in cooperation with the Government of Austria. The event enjoys the full support of United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Deputy Secretary-General Mark Malloch Brown, and Mr. Adolf Ogi, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace and former President of Switzerland. European Union Member States, as well as two accession countries, Bulgaria and Romania, are each sending two young leaders, a young man and a young woman ages 18 to 30, as delegates.

“It is important to create and enhance political awareness that sport is a powerful tool to build capacity in education, health, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace keeping,” said Austrian Secretary of State for Sport Karl Schweitzer. “Sport is an ideal ‘school for life’ and actively educates young people about the importance of key values, such as honesty, fair play, respect for oneself and others, and adherence to the rules.”

At the European Union Sport Directors Meeting in March, Mr. Schweitzer underlined the importance of sport as a tool to reach the Millennium Development Goals and invited participants to encourage their national governments to incorporate sport and development in national policies. He encouraged the European Commission to establish a data base on sport and development projects and an exchange of best practices. Mr. Schweitzer also pledged that while Austria holds the European Union Presidency, he would encourage European Union Sports Ministers to support sport for development and peace.

In several resolutions, the United Nations General Assembly has recognized the importance of youth participation and their potential contribution to development and has endorsed the full participation of youth in the life of society and decision-making.

“Young people have a strong affinity for sport, and the European Youth Leadership Summit will help link young leaders with peers in other regions to mobilize the power of sport in support of efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015,” said Djibril Diallo, Director of the United Nations New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace.

Using sport and culture as entry points, the Summit in Vienna aims to:

- Inspire European youth leaders to take an active role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, with a focus on Goal 8 – “Develop global partnership for development.”
- Reflect on key issues in Europe for youth, such as education, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, and social integration;
- Introduce and integrate the European youth leaders into the global youth leaders network that has emerged from other regional youth leadership meetings;
- Provide access to knowledge, networks and skills to enable young leaders to meet the challenges confronting their countries and communities relating to efforts to attain the MDGs and promote peace.
- Encourage young leaders to develop their own projects and advocacy campaigns, in cooperation with the United Nations system and other partners in support of the MDGs and peace.

The European Summit is the fifth in a series of regional youth leadership meetings that have taken place in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. These will culminate in the first ever United Nations Global Youth Leadership Summit to be held in New York on 30 October-1 November with youth leaders from the 191 Member States. The summits are building on the momentum of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005.

The European youth delegates are selected on the basis of their commitment to address global issues and the MDGs, including the use of sport and culture for peace building and development; leadership potential; experience with action-oriented projects; networking skills for mobilizing people and resources; record of advocacy work and as proponents of change; and commitment to be part of the global network of youth leaders.

The Summit agenda will include plenary sessions with United Nations specialists and delegates, combined with group discussions. The delegates will conclude the Summit by adopting the Vienna Declaration, which will present their vision for encouraging the new generation in Europe to help achieve the MDGs, working in cooperation with youth worldwide. The declaration will be brought to the Global Summit in New York.

The United Nations New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace, under the leadership of Mr. Ogi, works on behalf of the entire UN system to fully integrate sport into the development agenda and include sport-based activities in country programmes of UN agencies where appropriate.

In organizing the European Summit and youth leadership summit series, the New York Office is working in partnership with the Global Peace Initiative of Women (GPIW), an international network of women leaders who have come together to promote peace building and reconciliation efforts. The Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations in New York and the missions of other European Union members are assisting in the organization of the Summit, including arranging for the participation of the youth delegates. Sun Microsystems is the technology partner for the youth summit series, helping young leaders to harness the power of information and communications technology in support of efforts to achieve the MDGs.

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