

United Nations



Nations Unies

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

### **Summary of Press Briefing: Sport for Development and Peace**

VIENNA, 20 February 2006 – UNIS Vienna, in cooperation with the United Nations New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace and the Federal Chancellery of the Republic of Austria, organized a press briefing today on “Sport for Development and Peace”. The speakers were Austrian State Secretary for Sports, H.E. Karl Schweitzer; Director, United Nations New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace, Djibril Diallo; and President and Chief Executive Officer, Right To Play, and four-time Olympic gold medallist, Johann Koss. The briefing was moderated by Chief, News and Media Liaison Unit, UNIS Vienna, Anne Thomas,.

Mr. Schweitzer emphasized that sport could help meet global challenges such as armed conflict, and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). He was therefore glad Austria had decided to play an active part by joining the International Working Group (IWG) on Sport for Development and Peace as a funding country since 1 January. During its current Presidency of the European Union (EU), Austria would encourage fellow EU members to also play an active role in supporting the use of sport for development and peace, in particular during the EU Sports Directors meeting to take place in March.

Mr. Diallo conveyed the greetings of United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace Adolf Ogi. Mr. Diallo pointed out that, as we watched the Olympics in Turin, we realized once again that all nations loved sport. The values of sport were universal, and sport was a global language. This was why the United Nations was turning to the help of sport as a powerful tool in its work for peace and in achieving the MDGs. Mr. Diallo was pleased that 120 of the United Nations’ 191 Member States had reported activities on sports for development and peace, and that over 170 Heads of State and Government had declared their recognition, during the 2005 World Summit, that sport could foster peace and development.

Mr. Koss, who had come to Vienna from the Winter Olympics in Turin, welcomed the leadership of some of the Olympic athletes, in particular the United States gold medalist speed-skater Joey Cheek, who had announced his support to children in Darfur at a press conference in Turin, and made a generous donation to improving their living conditions. Mr. Koss emphasized that the combined efforts of Governments, the United Nations and civil society were crucial to move forward the agenda of sports for development and peace. Expressing the view that not all Governments took the potential of sport seriously enough, Mr. Koss thanked the Government of Austria for its active commitment to the issue.

A video presentation by Dr. Edith Schlaffer, President of the Austrian NGO “Frauen Ohne Grenzen” (Women Without Borders) followed, introducing a current project of the organization. The project had been created in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean Tsunami disaster, in which many women had drowned because they were not able to swim. In response, Women Without Borders was organizing swimming lessons for women in the Tsunami-stricken coastal regions of Tamil-Nadu, India.

The briefing was followed by a question-and-answer session.

In response to a question on how Right To Play was operating in Africa, Mr. Koss answered that the organization trained local people as coaches, who then trained others, in particular children. In Zambia, for instance, Right To Play had trained 700 coaches and organized sports festivals

around health clinics. Zambian football star Kalusha Bwalya was an athlete ambassador for Right To Play, and children were given photo cards with his picture as a reward for participating in vaccination campaigns.

On a question on the role of sport in combating terrorism, Mr. Diallo responded that the root cause of terrorism and violence was often to be found in poverty and the lack of basic education. It was therefore important not to leave the education of vulnerable youth to extremists, and sport projects were a very useful tool in this regard.

Answering a question on the extent of funding provided by Austria, Mr. Schweitzer said that 120,000 euros over a three-year period had been provided for the IWG, and further funding was being provided to projects such as the one presented by Women Without Borders.

**The briefing was attended by around 10 representatives of international and local media, including ORF Austrian television, *Wiener Zeitung*, *Sekkai Nippon*, *Okaz Daily*, and *Al-Hewar*, as well as five NGO representatives. A one-on-one interview was arranged for Mr. Schweitzer with ORF Austrian television. A one-on-one interview was arranged for Mr. Koss with the United Nations *Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) quarterly Update*.**