

United Nations



Nations Unies

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## **UN Secretary-General Annan urges European Youth Leaders to look to Sport to tackle Millennium Development Goals**

*For immediate release - Vienna, Austria, 16 June 2006* – For the first time, young leaders from across the European Union and the accession countries Bulgaria and Romania will focus on the convening power of sport and culture to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and promote peace. They are gathering at the United Nations European Youth Leadership Summit on 19-21 June at the Haus des Sports in Vienna, Austria.

“As the massive following of the FIFA World Cup currently shows us, sport has an exceptional power to mobilize, motivate and unite people from every continent, race and religion in a common cause. The same is true of culture in all its forms – from music to poetry and art,” said United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan in a message to the Summit.

The event is hosted by the Government of Austria as the current holder of the Presidency of the European Union, and is organized on behalf of the United Nations system by the United Nations New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace.

Calling the Summit a wonderful opportunity for Europe’s new generation in efforts to reach the Goals by 2015, Secretary-General Annan also said: “As leaders of the future, you are essential to our efforts to meet these simple, powerful, people-centered objectives, ranging from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education – all by the target date of 2015.”

Countries are represented by two young leaders, a young man and a young woman, ages 18 to 30. The Summit is the final in a two-year 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 youth leadership summit series is organized through cooperation with United Nations agencies; host governments; NGO partners, including the Global Peace Initiative of Women; and private sector partners, including the Geeta-Mohan Mittal Foundation, ITRI, and Sun Microsystems. Mr. Mohan Lal Mittal, founder of the Mittal Steel Co., will share his experiences in international development with the young leaders during the European Summit’s inaugural plenary.

Austrian State Secretary for Sport H.E. Karl Schweitzer welcomed the young leaders to the Summit, and said: “The Summit is an important opportunity to create awareness among young people in Europe about the value of sport as a powerful tool to build capacity in education, health, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace-keeping.”

Dr. Djibril Diallo, Chair of the Summit and Director of the United Nation New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace, said: “This pioneering Summit is the first in the region to draw on the unique appeal of

sport and culture among youth to mobilize support for achieving the MDGs and peace building.” Thanking the Government of Austria for hosting the event, he said: “The Summit will help link young leaders in Europe with their peers in other regions to forge global partnerships and launch new initiatives.”

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 a global partnership for development.”
- Reflect on key issues in Europe facing 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;
- 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 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 includes plenary sessions with United Nations specialists and delegates, combined with group discussions. 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.

The youth leaders will conclude the Summit by adopting the Vienna Declaration, which will their vision for engaging 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 guidance of Mr. Adolf Ogi, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace and former President of Switzerland, 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.

The young leaders at the Summit are from Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Observer youth leaders are from Macedonia FYR, Turkey, and Ukraine.

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