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Sport vital for promoting development, Secretary-General's Special Adviser tells Helsinki seminar

Helsinki, 9 March 2005: Sport teaches “skills and values essential to life,” and can help countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals, Mr. Adolf Ogi, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace told a seminar today in Helsinki, Finland. The event was held in connection with the International Year of Sport and Physical Education (IYSPE 2005).

Finland is encouraging sport-related development initiatives. For example, the Finnish Basketball Association’s FinnDo Basketball School in Bosnia helps reconciliation among ethnic communities, and a sports club is providing new and used soccer balls for primary schools in Tanzania.

Mr. Ogi, former president of Switzerland, reported that on a recent visit to Colombia and Brazil, where he met President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, he saw programmes to attract young people away from risks on the streets to healthier sports activities. He also pointed out that UNHCR works with the organization Right to Play to bring sport to refugee camps all over the world, and that a cricket series last year between India and Pakistan helped improve relations.

“Sport, thanks to its global cross-cutting capacities in human development, can add tremendous positive value to international development work,” Mr. Ogi concluded.

The seminar, on the theme “Put the ball on the move – Global development with sport,” was organized by the Finnish Sports Federation, Sports Development Aid (Liikery) and the Ministry of Education.

Visit the IYSPE web site at www.un.org/sport2005 and for further information please contact:

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