

European Youth Leadership Summit Closes; Adopts Vienna Declaration on Sport as a Means to Promote Development and Peace

VIENNA, 21 June (UN Information Service) -- The United Nations European Youth Leadership Summit came to a close today in Vienna, Austria. The Summit was a landmark event, where for the first time, young leaders from across the European Union and the accession countries Bulgaria and Romania focused on the convening power of sport and culture to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and promote peace.

From 19 to 21 June, the Summit, organized by the United Nations New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace on behalf of the UN system and hosted by the Government of Austria, as the current holder of the Presidency of the European Union, discussed ways to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through sport, culture and peace.

Countries were represented by two young leaders, a young man and a young woman, ages 18 to 30. The Summit was 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 United Nations Member States.

At the closing ceremony today, presided over by H.E. Karl Schweitzer, Austrian State Secretary for Sport, a torch, symbolizing the spirit of the Youth Leadership Summits, was passed from the youth leaders of Austria and Finland, representing the European Union countries, to the youth leaders of the United States, where the Global Youth Leadership Summit will be held.

“Though chronologically speaking, the Summit ends today, it is also the start of a challenging and new journey,” said Djibril Diallo, Director, United Nations New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace. “While it has had no precedent to follow, we can be confident of a sure and solid ground that our youth leaders will track because of their deep commitment to international relations and global cooperation, the maturity and esprit de corps they have demonstrated. What has impressed us most is the dedication to commit themselves to the Millennium Development Goals and the pursuit of peace and harmony, using the convening power of sport and culture”, added Mr. Diallo.

The delegates at the Summit adopted a final ‘Vienna Declaration’. The Vienna Declaration will be presented, through the Government of Austria, to the United Nations Secretary-General, and will be presented at the European Union Summit in Finland later this year, as well as to the Global Youth Leadership Summit in New York.

The Declaration expresses determination to see the young generation play its part in promoting development and peace to help build a better world, and affirms the commitment of European youth leaders to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Sport and cultural activities are powerful tools for accelerating progress towards achieving the MDGs, by contributing to efforts to reduce poverty and promote education, health, empowerment of women and girls and environmental sustainability, the Vienna Declaration underlines. The Declaration urges all EU member States to fulfill their pledge to contribute 0.7per cent of their GDP to development assistance.

The Declaration identifies sport and cultural activities as a tool to increase youth employment rates, and recognizes that gender, participation, and health issues can be tackled through creative initiatives and projects, including sports and cultural activities.

Acknowledging the need for a European platform to share best practices on youth projects regarding sport and culture, the Declaration urges that each European Union Presidency should support the implementation of at least one European-wide youth project, and asks all sport organizations in Europe, such as UEFA or the European Olympic Committee, to actively participate in the implementation of projects by providing expertise, funds and support through sports representatives.

Further to the Millennium Goal of 'Developing a global partnership for Development', the Vienna Declaration underlines that youth represent more than half of the world's population, and in order to achieve this goal, youth should be actively involved in building a global partnership for development by promoting sport as a vehicle for development, bringing with them values such as teamwork, fair-play, cooperation and personal development.

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.

Visit the Summit website: www.un.org/youthsummit

For information contact:

Vera Mehta

United Nations New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace

E-mail: vera.mehta@undp.org