



**Address by
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**Special Adviser to the
Secretary-General of the United Nations on
Sport for Development and Peace
Under-Secretary-General
at the Press Conference for the**



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It is a great honour for me to benefit from the leadership of the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. The Secretary-General has shown the way in accepting sport as a full-fledged partner for development and peace-building work.

By integrating sport into development programmes, the United Nations is not only strengthening its ties with civil society at large; the United Nations is also benefiting from an amazing tool to achieve its own goals. The positive aspects of sport, as we have shown in the United Nations report on “Sport for Development and Peace – Towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals” are able to assist the United Nations in their development work, in particular for young people.

Sport is about participation, integration and belonging. Sport gives a sense of common purpose and reaches audiences otherwise difficult to involve. The real value of sport is its power to promote human dignity and a feeling of unity through the universal acceptance of rules and values such as respect for the opponent, without whom there would be no game, for the rules of the game and the decisions of the referee. With this fundamental conception, the impact of sport can be felt on whole nations at global events such as the Olympic Games as well as on each individual. The convening power of sport offers limitless opportunities to build sustainable partnerships and to find solutions for a better world.

Sport is the best school of life !

As the Special Adviser to United Nations Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, I repeat this message around the world since February 2001. I am convinced by this message as for me it is more than a slogan. Sport has helped me in my life and I have witnessed the power of sport for development and peace many times all around the world.

Sport is good for health.

It's obvious that the regular practice of physical activity has a positive effect on health conditions. Evidence shows that regular physical activity all people with physical, social and mental health benefits.

Physical activity acts positively on diet improvement and discourages the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs.

Physical activity is an effective method of disease prevention for the individual and, for nations, a cost-effective way to improve public health.

Sport is good for economic development.

A physically active population is a healthier population, improving the productivity of the workforce and increasing economic output.

Sport and the sports equipment manufacturing industry is also an economic force that is constantly growing, providing jobs and development opportunities.

Sport, thanks to its global and cross-cutting capacity can add tremendous positive value to international development and cooperation work.

In October 2003, the United Nations published a report by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace. The Task Force convened by the Secretary-General was co-chaired by Ms Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF and by myself. The report analyses in detail the potential contribution that sport can make towards achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. It provides an overview of the growing role that sport activities are playing in many United Nations' programmes and crystallizes the lessons learned. It also includes recommendations aimed at maximizing and mainstreaming the use of sport.

Governments hold a key position. By being fully engaged domestically as well as in cooperation with each other in their international development and cooperation efforts, Governments can develop greater awareness for the issues of development through sport and support the setting up of innovative partnerships.

Tunisia has presented a resolution to the 58th session of the United Nations General Assembly. In November 2003, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 58/5 entitled "Sport as a means to promote Education, Health, Development and Peace". The main goal of the resolution is to elaborate and implement partnership initiatives and to develop projects to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals through sport and it proclaims the year 2005 as the "*International Year of Sport and Physical Education*" (IYSPE 2005).

The IYSPE 2005 will provide a unique opportunity to make the case for the value of sport for human development and lasting peace. The Secretary-General has accepted that an office be set up in Geneva to support national committees organising the celebration of the IYSPE 2005. The International Olympic Committee has asked its National Olympic Committees to be involved as well.

Within the United Nations system there is a growing experience of using sport as a tool for development and peace. However, much more should be done. Sport is yet to be mainstreamed into the development agenda or the United Nations system. So far, sports initiatives are generally ad hoc, informal, and isolated. The IYSPE 2005 is an ideal platform to develop a coherent and systematic strategy for increasing a more systematic use of sport by all concerned.

The United Nations system and our partners are planning many activities to support national committees in their efforts to celebrate the IYSPE 2005. In 2005 I expect to see many partnership efforts between Governments, the private sector, NGOs and the United Nations. The United Nations Fund for international Partnerships (UNFIP) as well as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will support us together with many others in the effort of building partnerships for development through sport.

Sport, with its joys and triumphs, its pains and defeats, its emotions and challenges, is an unrivalled medium for the promotion of education, health, development and peace. I am convinced that sport helps us demonstrate, in our pursuit of the betterment of humanity, that there is more that unites than divides us.

The two world-class athletes present here today are the perfect embodiment of how sport can share forces with the United Nations system and reach out to those who are difficult to reach. Athletes are essential role models vital to the messages they carry to those who need to hear them. And beyond the message, the athletes are making a difference in contributing, with their own hands-on experience, to making this world a better place.

Margaret Okayo and Roger Federer, I appreciate your support for this International Year and wish to thank you for all what you will do during the International Year of Sport and Physical education to promote health, education, development and peace around the world.

I thank you for your attention.