



Press Release

Virtual International Expert Group Meeting of the Global Programme on Security of Major Sporting Events, and Promotion of Sport and its Values as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism

New York (Virtual), 23 September 2020 - Sports have historically played a significant role in the dissemination of positive values throughout the world and across civilizations and cultures, particularly for youth. Sport is a powerful vector to facilitate integration, promote gender equality, encourage youth empowerment and support efforts aimed at preventing and countering violent-extremism and radicalization.

With this vision in mind and within the framework of the “United Nations Global Programme on the Security of Major Sporting Events, and Promotion of Sport and its Values as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE)”, the United Nations office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) has convened, from 21 to 23 September 2020, an International Expert Group Meeting on PVE through Sports. The event was organized in partnership with the co-implementing partners of the programme, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), and the International Centre for Sport Security (ICSS).

The virtual International Expert Group meeting follows the 18 September virtual high-level event, which featured discussions between senior United Nations officials, Member States and international organizations representatives, policymakers, and sports personalities committed to the fight against violent extremism. The workstream of the project dedicated to Security of Major Sporting Events was launched on 3 February 2020.

Participants to the virtual International Expert Group meeting included representatives from Member States designated as programme national focal points to the programme’s network, which includes international and regional-level organizations’ experts, practitioners and researchers from sport clubs, foundations, academia, think tanks and civil society practitioners. They all engaged in a series of thematic interactive sessions, including ‘Key points by the International and Regional Organizations representatives’, ‘The role of athletes in promoting dialogue and preventing violent extremism’, and ‘Sport and PCVE: the engagement of sport bodies and federations.’

In her keynote address, Ms. Maria Francesca Spatolisano, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), recalled “how history has shown again and again, from ancient Greece to modern South Africa, that sport has the power to promote tolerance and to reconcile communities in conflict, prompting member states and the United Nations to guide and advance the contributions of sport to development and peace, including through the prevention of violent extremism”.

Dr. Daniel Koehler, Director of the German Institute on Radicalization and De-Radicalization Studies (GIRDS) shared the case of the Martial Arts Schools against Violent Extremism as an innovative response to ISIL’s active call to martial arts training, and to white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups’ ideologies.

Mr. Daouda Azoupiou, Burkina Faso's Minister of Sports and Recreation, remarked: "I call for international solidarity in terms of sports cooperation and the sharing of good experiences to make our world a space of peace, of development of our youth and of sustainable development."

Ms. Nadia Nadim, soccer player for Paris Saint-Germain Football Club (PSG) and the Danish National Team shared her personal story describing her grievances during her childhood as refugee and the relief that she found through sport practice.

Joyce Deloge, Technical Specialist for PVE with UNDP Tanzania (name) representative of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) highlighted a success story in Tanzania, which aimed at building trust through sport activities involving vulnerable demographics and security forces.

Among key observations, participants noted the need to increase the understanding of Member States' review of metrics associated with sport-related initiatives and dedicating efforts for the consistent and effective development and implementation of sports-based PVE initiatives.

Policy and community-level technical guidance is being prepared as part of the programme that will launch a global campaign bringing together renowned athletes and youth in a joint effort to Prevent and Counter Terrorism (PCVE). In addition, through the Sports Programme, the United Nations will provide direct grants to support civil society organizations and sports associations working towards achieving tangible results by leveraging sports values to strengthen communities' resilience to violent ideologies.

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For more information, visit: www.un.org/counterterrorism/sports or contact:

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