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“Sport for a Safer City”

International Youth Crime Prevention
and Cities Summit
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Introduction

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to address you today at the International Youth Crime Prevention and Cities Summit here in Durban, South Africa. This is the first time for me in South Africa and I consider it a real privilege to be here.

The Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace has three main functions:

- As an advocate, my role is to promote understanding and support for sport as a tool for development and peace.
- As a facilitator, I bring together actors from different sectors of civil society and within the UN system. I encourage dialogue, collaboration and partnerships around sport for development and peace.
- As a representative, I will represent the Secretary-General and the UN system at important global sport events and other strategically important fora.

In short, I work as an ambassador of the positive potential and best values of sport.

Last week I was in Switzerland for the EURO 2008, the football championship for European nations. Switzerland and Austria are organizing this enormous sports event. It was wonderful to experience the joining of humanity together, and to see the spirit of fair-play on the football field, in the stadium and the lack of violence during and after the Games. It would be wonderful if that same spirit was found in today's cities.

The Youth of Today

In the world today, there are 2.2 billion children¹ and 1.5 billion youth (aged 12-24).² Of these, 1.9 billion³ and 1.3 billion⁴ respectively live in developing countries. Not one of these children is born a criminal, not one is born socially deviant. So why are today's youth so often so violent? Why are today's youth turning so often to crime?

The reasons that youth turn to crime are not dissimilar from country to country. The reasons for dissatisfaction in any community are diverse and complex. We see this here in South Africa with the recent outbreak of violence. But the cloud will pass, and Africa and the world will get behind South Africa in the hosting of the World Cup. But however complex, however poor, culturally diverse, economically disparate, disintegrated, intolerant, all over the world, children need adequate nutrition, health care, nurturing and love. Children need to feel socially included and equal with their peers. We need to invest in our children, provide them the attention needed.

As Franklin D. Roosevelt said:

“We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can always build our youth for the future”.

⁴ Ibid.
Reasons for youth criminality

A child who is unmotivated and uninspired will develop into a socially and culturally isolated adolescent. Many youth live in contexts and circumstances where disadvantage places them at risk of involvement in delinquency and crime. A child with low self-esteem and self-worth, lack of companionship, poor school performance or non-attendance and the absence of caring adult guidance can all contribute to the choice to engage in delinquent or criminal behaviour. In the case of youth living in extreme poverty or armed conflict situations, coercion and/or a lack of alternative means of survival may be the primary driver.

A child who is excluded from a secure family environment, and cast onto the streets with nowhere to go and nothing to do will seek a new culture, a new community. On the streets, that culture is often gang culture. Anti-social behaviour will turn that child to drugs, crime and violence.

The Values of Sport

One of the few activities common to youth all over the world and acceptable within each country and within each community is sport. Sport can be used to develop citizenship values in young people. Sport can provide a community which is not a gang. Sport can provide values which are contrary to those of a gang.

Sport provides the opportunity for:
- Team-building skills;
- Communication skills;
- Decision making skills;
- Problem solving skills;
- Life skills;
- Sense of community;
- Self-esteem;
- Personal responsibility;
- Empathy;
- Socio-moral development;
- Resiliency; and
- Improved educational achievement.

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5 M. Ewing and V. Seefeldt, Youth Sport in America: An Overview, originally published in Series 2, Number 11 of the PCPFS Research Digest. Online: www.fitness.gov/youthsports.pdf
6 S. Priest & M.A. Gass, Effective Leadership in Adventure Programming (Champaign, IL, Human Kinetics: 1997).
7 Ibid.
Sport's ability to contribute to these skills and values is believed to be linked to a number of factors, although more research is needed to clarify the processes involved and their subsequent effects. Perhaps the most obvious is sport’s significance and popularity among children and youth, particularly boys.  

Different sports have been found to provide different social benefits: team sports e.g. football, volleyball develop social skills such as communication, conflict management and working effectively with others toward a common goals; individual sports e.g. athletics, table tennis, develop self reliance, self-discipline and personal goal-setting; extreme sports e.g. mountain biking, mountaineering, kayaking, provide adrenaline, and an alternative to drug use and violence, sense of adventure.

At all times, and across all sports, sport must be conducted in the right spirit, with appropriate community conditions and facilities. Sports programmes must be well-designed and focused on the healthy development of children. By integrating with other community level interventions, and involving parents, teachers and peers, sports programmes can make a positive impact.

**The Limitations of Sport**

Sport is a mirror of society. As long as our society does not get rid of violence, crime and cheating, they will remain reflected in sport. But let me stress that doping, hooliganism and any other behaviour contradicting the genuine spirit of sport must be continually fought against. I want to promote the good aspects of sport at the expense of the bad. I strongly believe in the unique potential of sport to help create a better world.

**Sport in the prevention of youth crime**

Evidence shows that those who participate in sport are less likely to engage in delinquent behaviour, and have reduced rates of criminal arrest and anti-social behaviour.

Many attempts have been made to try to explain the negative relationship between delinquency and sport involvement and a variety of hypotheses are being explored. These include:

- Sport reduces the amount of unstructured time for youth;  

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19 Ewing and Seefeldt (2001) *Ibid.* The following sources are cited:


21 Ewing and Seefeldt (2001)
• Sport encourages less frequent, shorter, or less intense interaction with deviant others;22
• Sport provides a second chance for those engaged in delinquency, criminal gangs and armed conflict by offering a path to a positive alternative lifestyle.
• The values of sport – such as teamwork, effort, and achievement – discourage delinquent behaviour;23
• Sport fosters a belief that hard work can lead to just rewards;24 and
• Sport increases “protective” factors that enable youth to resist pressures to engage in delinquency and crime.25

The Role of the Urban Environment

Sport can be a powerful tool to address today’s social problems. But each community, each city requires minimal services and infrastructure to make sport possible. The physical and social environment of cities has a major impact on physical activity levels. Crowding, crime, traffic, poor air quality, and a lack of parks, sports and recreational facilities, make physical activity and sports a difficult choice for many people.

The challenge for governments is to foster sustainable environments that encourage the regular practice of physical activity and sport in the community.26 Key issues also include access to open spaces, playgrounds, gymnasiums, stairwells and road networks, as well as social factors such as levels of crime and the local sense of community.27

The challenge before us is how to foster sustainable environments that encourage sport in the community and how to manage social factors such as levels of crime and the local sense of community. Urban planning and policy choices must be made wisely.

The Role of the United Nations

Around the world, sport is being used for education, health, development and peace. The United Nations has an important role to play including the appointment of UN Goodwill Ambassadors. These Ambassadors are often athletes such as the appointment by UNICEF of Francesco Totti from Italy and George Weah from Liberia, and well-known sport teams such as A.C. Milan, Manchester United, and Real Madrid as Goodwill Ambassadors.

Research on youth participation in criminal gangs has shown that lack of a positive adult role model is the best predictor of gang membership28 and a key differentiating factor between gang and non-gang members,29 underscoring the critical importance of positive adult role models in the lives of youth. High-profile athletes – local or global – can have a strong influence on youth who admire and often wish to emulate them. Role models often appeal for resources for sports facilities. They visit schools and

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24 Ewing and Seefeldt (2001).
27 Ibid.
communities to communicate important messages about health, drugs, HIV/AIDS, motivation, and life skills.

My role as Special Adviser is to promote the use of sport as a tool to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals (see annex). My role is also to strengthen global partnerships and local programmes. Programmes such as SCORE, here in South Africa, that uses sport to provide skills and opportunities.

The partnership between UNODC and the Qatar National Olympic Committee (QNOC) to establish the Global Sport Fund (GSF) is an example of a programme initiated to help prevent vulnerable young people from being sucked into crime and drug abuse. GSF was established by UNODC with funding from the QNOC. It is intended that GSF-supported activities will be models for what can be accomplished by sport on and off the field, strengthening communities by helping young people choose better lives.

Partnerships are crucial. We cannot be experts in all areas and therefore we must identify experts in particular areas of social work.

The youth of today need our help. They face immense instability. We need to develop and build individuals who are responsible, act with integrity and play a part in the development of their communities.

As former Minister of Interior and Sports in Germany, I have seen how crucial it is that we support our young people, that we make them proud to be members of their communities and that we keep them protected within those communities.

Sport can support them, it can make them proud and confident members of their community; it can keep them in their community and aware from criminality.

**Conclusion**

As members of the international community, we can assist the youth of today. We can give priority to communities that are severely affected by social exclusion, deprivation, conflict and criminality. We can help provide security: within the family and within the community. While we cannot solve all the problems, we can prevent new ones arising. A dialogue is needed amongst communities, amongst experts. Our efforts need to be cost-effective and impact-oriented. We need a coordinated effort to help the youth of this world.

It is no coincidence that this conference is held here, in South Africa, where, in almost exactly 2 years from now, one of the world’s largest sporting events will kick off: the FIFA World Cup. This event is a great opportunity to send to the world a positive message. A message of fairplay, friendship, respect, tolerance, and solidarity! It will be an enormous sporting festival and It will be a success, but only if it leaves a lasting legacy, not only in South Africa, but on the entire continent!

Thank you for your attention.
## Contribution of sport to attainment of the Millennium Development Goals

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<th>MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL</th>
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<td>1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger</td>
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  - Participants, volunteers and coaches acquire transferable life skills which increase their employability  
  - Vulnerable individuals are connected to community services and supports through sport-based outreach programs  
  - Sport programs and sport equipment production provide jobs and skills development  
  - Sport can help prevent diseases that prevent people from working and impose health care costs on them  
  - Sport can help reduce stigma and increase self-esteem, self-confidence and social skills, leading to increased employability  |
| 2. Achieve universal primary education |  
  - School sport programs motivate children to enrol in and attend school and can help improve academic achievement  
  - Sport-based community education programs provide alternative education opportunities for children who cannot attend school  
  - Sport can help erode stigma preventing children with disabilities from attending school  |
| 3. Promote gender equality and empower women |  
  - Sport helps improve female physical and mental health and offers opportunities for social interaction and friendship  
  - Sport participation leads to increased self-esteem, self-confidence, and enhanced sense of control over one’s body  
  - Girls and women access leadership opportunities and experience  
  - Sport can cause positive shifts in gender norms that afford girls and women greater safety and control over their lives  
  - Women and girls with disabilities are empowered by sport-based opportunities to acquire health information, skills, social networks, and leadership experience  |
| 4. Reduce child mortality |  
  - Sport can be used to educate and deliver health information to young mothers, leading to healthier children  
  - Increased physical fitness improves children’s resistance to some diseases  
  - Sport can help reduce rate of higher-risk adolescent pregnancies  
  - Sport based vaccination and prevention campaigns help reduce child deaths and disability from measles, malaria and polio  
  - Inclusive sport programs help lower the likelihood of infanticide by promoting greater acceptance of children with disabilities  |
| 5. Improve maternal health |  
  - Sport for health programs offer girls and women greater access to reproductive health information and services  
  - Increased fitness levels help speed post-natal recovery.  |
| 6. Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria, and other diseases |  
  - Sport programs can be used to reduce stigma and increase social and economic integration of people living with HIV/AIDS  
  - Sport programs are associated with lower rates of health |

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risk behaviour that contributes to HIV infection
- Programs providing HIV prevention education and empowerment can further reduce HIV infection rates
- Sport can be used to increase measles, polio and other vaccination rates
- Involvement of celebrity athletes and use of mass sport events can increase reach and impact of malaria, TB and other education and prevention campaigns

7. Ensure environmental sustainability
- Sport-based public education campaigns can raise awareness of importance of environmental protection and sustainability
- Sport-based social mobilization initiatives can enhance participation in community action to improve local environment

8. Develop a global partnership for development
- Sport for Development and Peace efforts catalyse global partnerships and increase networking among governments, donors, NGOs and sport organizations worldwide