Dear Mr. Chairman, Ministers, Excellencies, delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you Director General for extending this invitation for me to address all State Parties to the International Convention against Doping in Sport. I was with the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, in Copenhagen three weeks ago for the Olympic Congress and in New York last week for the adoption of three resolutions on sport by the General Assembly. The Secretary-General sends you his best regards and fully supports you in your efforts to combat doping in sport.

In March last year, Ban Ki-moon appointed me as his Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace. In this capacity, my role is to assist the UN in their efforts to promote sport and play as powerful tools in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and in the attainment of sustainable peace. As an ADVOCATE, my role is to lead and coordinate the efforts of the United Nations system to promote understanding and support for sport as an efficient tool for social change. As a FACILITATOR, I encourage dialogue, collaboration and partnerships around sport for development and peace. And as a REPRESENTATIVE, I represent the Secretary-General and the United Nations system at global, national and local sports events.

In order to be able to fulfil these 3 roles, I need to be able to state with all conviction, evidence and heart that sport is good, that sport is healthy and will teach children life skills, empower them, that it will provide them opportunities for education, healthy living, and lead to communities living in peace and harmony. To be able to do so, I need sport to be free of doping, but also of violence, corruption, discrimination, racism and trafficking. Therefore, efforts to ensure that sport remains clean are crucial to my efforts and impact as Special Adviser. Your work is absolutely indispensable to mine. Clean sport is our responsibility. I was the General Manager of a professional football club for 18 years, so I don’t need to tell you that I am familiar with elite sport. But now I am a member of the United Nations family and as such, my duty is to promote the best attributes of sport to help and empower individuals and communities. And I am referring here to sport for ALL: for children and youth, for the elderly, for girls and women, for persons living with mental and physical disabilities, for people living in slums, for those living with HIV and AIDS, for victims of conflict and natural disasters, for refugees, for everyone!

We all know that doping is the coffin of sports. We want to win this fight because doping does not only harm athletes, doping kills sport! Sport alone cannot solve the problem of doping because doping is not only a problem of sport, it’s a problem of public health, of education, of science and law.
Following my appointment in March 2008, I have advocated for signature and ratification of the Convention in my travels throughout the world. As I understand, there are still 67 countries that have not yet ratified the Convention. We need to work together to reach the goal of having all 163 UNESCO member states ratify the Convention. We need all countries to unite and show that they will not tolerate drugs in sport. We need governments, the sports industry, science and sponsors to work together to strengthen ethical values, personal responsibility and integrity in sport. It is crucial that we enhance education and prevention efforts.

The work of WADA and all anti-doping agencies is crucial. By working with governments and federations, the impact of your joint actions and commitment has been fast and far-reaching. By collaborating, by sharing of information on what programmes and policies have the greatest impact in the fight against doping, we can win the battle. We need to incorporate lessons learnt from successful experiences elsewhere. The battle will only be won when the image of sport is clean. Sport is a great school of life. Sport contributes to personal development and the acquisition of fundamental social skills.

But we need to change the mentality of athletes. Sport is not about winning at all costs; sport is about being a role model in your community and country. Sport is as much about tolerance, respect and cooperation as it is about competition and medals. Sport should remain fun and healthy for those who participate. Sport should bring them joy and well-being. While sport has become a multi-billion dollar industry, we cannot let this drive our young people, our athletes to take drugs, to harm themselves for the sake of a few dollars. Due to sport’s universal popularity, its power and influence in society, we need our athletes to be positive role models. We must therefore support initiatives such as UEFA’s anti-doping campaign, “Be clean, be part of my team”, that raises awareness about the dangers of drug taking.

Through my activities as Special Adviser, I have a particular focus on sport for development activities on the African continent. The African continent has 53 UNESCO member states, and 30 have now ratified the Convention. It is our task to urge the remaining 23 countries to ratify the Convention. If the African continent aims to have a 100% completion it will signal to other governments and the sports movement that doping has no place on the continent.

I welcome the decision that as of 1 January 2010, under the World Code, International Federations and Major Games Organizers have committed to doing everything possible to award World Championships and major sporting events only to countries who have ratified the Convention. I also welcome coaching and training programmes that have integrated anti-doping education into them. For example, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime has launched an initiative called the Global Sports Fund that organizes Youth Camps and training courses promoting the use of sport to help improve physical and mental health, reinforce positive social skills, and protect youth from the temptation of drug use and delinquency. I myself visited one of their camps in Cairo earlier this year.

In August next year, the first ever Youth Olympic Games will be held in Singapore for athletes between the ages of 14 and 18. For the IOC – which has just been granted Observer Status to the UN General Assembly – these Games will be the first ones that contain a Culture and Education Programme. These programmes are the cornerstone to educating young athletes about healthy lifestyles and the harmful effects of drugs. It is crucial that young athletes understand that sport must be drug-free and that no pressure, from peers, parents, society or from within themselves should force them to take drugs.

The combined efforts of UNESCO, anti-doping agencies and all Member States who are implementing the International Convention against Doping in Sport will mean that we can continue to use sport for education, health, development and peace, for individual well-being and social change.

Collaboration between the sports community and governments is essential. Together, we need to continue to advocate and fight for clean sport so that parents are proud of their children when they see them grow and shine when they take part in sports activities and so that countries are proud when they know their athletes have won medals as clean, upright citizens! Thank you.