



## **UN General Assembly 67<sup>th</sup> Session**

Plenary meeting considering agenda item 12 on Sport for development and peace

**Trusteeship Council Chamber, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2013**

### **Statement by Dr Jacques Rogge, President of the International Olympic Committee**

Mr President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the International Olympic Committee and as a representative of the world of sport, I thank and congratulate the General Assembly for approving a proclamation establishing the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace.

Your decision recognises the value of the work that is underway every day, in every region of the world, to share the joy and benefits of sport with people of all ages and abilities. This important work is carried out by National Olympic Committees; International and National Sports Federations; sports clubs; governmental and non-governmental organisations; neighbourhood associations; corporate-sponsored entities; and countless volunteers who believe in the power of sport.

Designating the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace will bring others to this great cause and deliver more benefits to more people.

We are particularly grateful to the UN Group of Friends of Sport for Development and Peace, co-chaired by Monaco and Tunisia, for their support of this initiative. I also want to thank President Vuk Jeremić and Wilfried Lemke, the Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace, for their help.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, a strong advocate for using sport to foster development and peace, has played a key role in elevating this issue and in working with the IOC to forge closer ties between the UN and the world of sport. His annual Report on Sport for Development and Peace has given sport a more prominent role on the UN agenda and serves as a call to action for UN member states, sports organisations, non-governmental organisations and the private sector.

Placing sport at the service of humanity has been the mission of the IOC since its founding 1894. The Olympic Games are at the core of that effort. They provide a global platform for athletes from every region on earth to compete in an environment that promotes excellence, friendship and respect. Differences of religion, language, culture and ethnicity do not matter on the field of play. We have seen many examples over the years of friendships formed by Olympians from countries in conflict.

The power of sport derives from the values of sport, and it is those values that make sport so effective as a tool for development and peace.

The United Nations has long recognised sport's contribution to development and peace, going at least as far back as 1952, when UNESCO highlighted sport's value as a tool for education. Other actions since then have continued to raise awareness of sport's potential.

The many UN actions are fully aligned with the Olympic Charter's declaration that "the practice of sport is a human right" and that "every individual must have the possibility of practising sport, without discrimination of any kind." That shared commitment to the fundamental truth that every human being can benefit from sport and physical activity is the foundation for the longstanding cooperation between the United Nations and the International Olympic Committee.

We also share a commitment to promoting peace. In 1993, the General Assembly revived the ancient Olympic Truce with the adoption of Resolution 48/11, entitled "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal." The Resolution called on member states to cease hostilities during the 1994 Olympic Winter Games in Lillehammer, Norway. Similar resolutions have been adopted in advance of every edition of the Games since then.

The true worth of sport is not determined by words on paper, but by how sport is practised. Stripped of its values, sport is combat by another name. Sport with values is a gateway to cultural understanding, education, health and economic and social development.

We have seen the true worth of sport and physical activity many times. It helps young people learn the value of self-discipline and goal-setting. It builds self-confidence. It defies gender stereotypes. It provides an alternative to conflict and delinquency. It can bring hope and a sense of purpose to refugees, impoverished communities and other people in need. It helps keep young people in school, it brings health.

Sport has been an integral part of the global campaign to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It also plays a vital role in the fight against non-communicable diseases. The high-level meeting of the General Assembly on NCDs in 2011 offered a strong affirmation of sport's contribution to public health. Physical inactivity is one of the leading risk factors for NCDs worldwide, with direct and clear links to obesity, diabetes, heart disease and breast and colon cancer. Recent research indicates that approximately 70 per cent of the world's population fails to get the minimum amount of sufficient exercise.

The annual International Day of Sport for Development and Peace is a fitting complement to the annual celebration of Olympic Day, which commemorates the founding of the modern Olympic Movement on 23 June 1894. Every year, millions of people in countries around the world participate in a wide variety of Olympic Day activities, from 10-kilometre runs to group exercise sessions.

We have seen what sport can do if given the opportunity. And we know it can do so much more. Sport cannot resolve all of the world's ills, but it can make a valuable contribution toward resolving some very serious problems.

The proclamation establishing the International Day is more than words on a piece of paper. It is a call to action that will make a difference in the lives of people around the world.

Thank you so much for reaffirming your belief in the power of sport with this important step forward for development and peace.

\*\*\*\*\*