

DECLARATION

9th World Sport for All Congress “Sport for all and elite sport: rivals or partners?”

Arnhem, The Netherlands, 27 – 30 October 2002

Close to 450 participants from 95 countries, representing sports organisations - with a strong delegation of International Federations -, governments and the academic community gathered together under the patronage of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the General Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF). The 9th World Sport for All Congress was organised by the Netherlands Olympic Committee * Netherlands Sports Confederation (NOC*NSF).

The theme of the Congress “*Sport for all and elite sport: rivals or partners?*” continues to be of particular interest to sport organisations and to the Olympic Movement.

The Congress studied the relationship between elite sport and sport for all based on the scientific evidence and practical experience presented in the sessions, with the aim of setting directions for future policies of the voluntary, governmental and private organisations involved in the promotion of sport and physical activity.

Call for Action

There is a need for all stakeholders – organised sport, the public and private sectors and society at large – to take action:

- To establish and promote sports and physical activity policies and programmes aimed at lifetime, enjoyable sport and physical activity participation according to people’s individual needs, capabilities and motivation;
- To guarantee equal access to sports programmes and services to all levels of society throughout the world;
- To provide specific services and programmes for diverse target groups so as to secure the loyalty and participation of these groups in the development process;
- To promote professional support to programmes, services and other activities;
- To initiate quality policy and management practices within sports provision and services, and develop instruments to measure their efficacy;
- To create modern communication tools and networks between all forms of sport and with society at large;
- To use elite sport as an encouragement for sport for all as sport for all is a basis for elite sport;
- To consider sport for all and elite sport as a single entity, since both can benefit from each other;
- For elite sport to remain a role model for innovation by creating new rules, training methods, practice and products which then can be implemented broadly;
- For sport for all to be supported by elite sport, as elite sport relies on the support of sport for all.

The widely-accepted conventional wisdom that there is a positive synergy between sport for all and elite sport, i.e. successful performance in elite sport requires a strong foundation of sport for all and vice versa, was both supported and challenged by the evidence presented. The critical evidence suggested that sport for all and elite sport constitute two distinct domains with discrete aims and working procedures; that people's personal movement behaviour is increasingly independent of the services of organised sports; and that the role model concept of sporting idols may have, at best, only a marginal impact. Participation in sports continues to show striking gradients according to age, disability, ethnicity and social class in particular, indicating an ongoing imbalance between the demand and supply of sports opportunities and services.

In addition to these intra-sport developments, the sports community is facing new social challenges such as public health, equity, tolerance and environmental sustainability, which call for a sensible response from both sport for all and elite sport. Of particular importance currently is the recent WHO initiative in taking physical activity as an integral part of its agenda to combat the increasing global burden of non-communicable diseases, in both the developed and developing worlds. This initiative represents a new challenge and at the same time a tremendous opportunity for the sports movement as a whole, and sport for all in particular. An active role in this area can contribute uniquely and importantly to the promotion of public health and at the same time strengthen the social credibility and accountability of sport.

The Congress agreed that all organisations involved should provide an offer of lifetime sport and physical activity that encourages every individual to be physically active and participate in sport at their own level of "need", from recreational to elite. This can be accomplished only in a coherent system of supply of sporting activities at all levels. For this reason, the Congress is convinced that working together rather than separately is the best approach for the well-being of sport and communities, and that it is important to take action to secure the continuation of this partnership and prevent the possibility of sport for all and elite sport becoming rivals. Moreover, sport for all and elite sport are complementary elements within the whole area of sport and physical activity.