



Press Release

High-Level Event 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, 18 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”, the United Nations office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) has convened a High-Level Meeting on the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) through Sports, 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 workstream of the project dedicated to Security of Major Sporting Events was launched on 3 February 2020.

The virtual high-level meeting 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 event will be followed by a technical-level International Expert Group Meeting on 21-23 September 2020 where representatives from governments, international and regional organizations, sport bodies, academia and civil society organizations will share experiences and discuss actionable good practices of sport-based interventions aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE) that can inspire the inclusion and further acknowledgment of sports within national and regional PCVE action plans.

The event precedes the launch of a series of initiatives such as the development of a guide for policymakers, a training handbook and a global campaign, which will bring together globally renowned athletes and youth in a joint effort to PCVE. The campaign, which is currently being developed, should gain significant exposure during upcoming major sporting events, including the 2021 Tokyo Olympics and the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. In addition, the project will launch a grant-awarding mechanism for local civil society organizations working on sports-based prevention of violent extremism (PVE) at the grassroots level in selected countries of Africa and the Middle East.

The project is supported by the State of Qatar, the United Nations Peace and Development Fund (People’s Republic of China) and the Republic of Korea.

Quotes from key participants at the opening session

Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism

This High-Level meeting reflects the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism’s commitment to actively engage on the promotion of sport and its values to prevent violent extremism. Sport helps children and

teenagers across the globe to build the psychological and emotional strength to be better, more tolerant and respectful citizens. Sport equips them with the right tools to resist terrorist propaganda.

Defeating terrorism and violent extremism is a marathon. Let's join forces to further enhance our determination to cross the finish line.

H.E. Ms. Alya Al-Thani, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the UN
Qatar is extremely proud to host the forthcoming FIFA World Cup in 2022 - the first World Cup in the Middle East and Arab world. We view the World Cup as a catalyst for Qatar and the region to accelerate social progress and to build a better future for the generations to come.

It's more important than ever to support sports and physical activity. Sport must be included in recovery plans post Covid-19 and in national strategies for sustainable development. Sport is key to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on health and well-being and in building back better.

H.E. Mr. Geng Shuang, Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations

China commends the UNOCT for convening this high-level meeting to discuss the important topic of promoting sport and its values as a tool to prevent and counter violent extremism. Sport is a hallmark of social development and human progress. Promoting the values of sport is conducive to advocating peace, tolerance and respect, maintaining equity, stability and harmony, and removing the root causes of terrorism and extremism ideologies.

H.E. Mr. Chull-joo Park, Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations

Therefore, it is high time to further invest in efforts to enhance resilience and inclusiveness in our societies. The Republic of Korea has long recognized the positive role of sports in uniting people and creating an atmosphere of peace and rapprochement, as was the case of PyeongChang Winter Olympics. Sport values can be a powerful means to promote a culture of tolerance and mutual respect. Sports can also provide opportunity for self-development and empowerment to the youth, women and girls, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized communities.

Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos, High Representative of the UN Alliance of Civilizations

Sport can be an engine for positive change. It is a viable tool for inclusiveness and diversity. The power of sport rests in its ability to break down the walls between people whether they are players or spectators regardless of their faith, race or culture.

Ms. Antonia Marie De Meo Director of the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute

Sport plays an important role in promoting trust, inclusivity, respect for diversity, and cross-cultural engagement. Through UNICRI's work to prevent violent extremism, we know that these values are key to building resilience to the spread of radicalization and violent extremism in communities at risk.

Mr. Mohammed Hanzab, Chairman of the International Centre for Sport Security, Founder of Save the Dream

Sport positively impacts billions of lives, every single day. Major sporting events and sport in general, are unique agents and catalysts for positive change. I am confident that following this meeting and further development work, we will deliver solid mechanisms which will be effectively used in sports-based policies to prevent violent extremism. While that will be a significant step, we must continue to work together and stay committed to international cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships within the framework of the United Nations' agenda with the aim of promoting the use of sport as a powerful tool to address the root causes of violent extremism and as a soft-power resting on its ability

to instill the values of tolerance and inclusiveness, and to create opportunities for the most vulnerable targets in the high-risk communities.

Ms. Suad Galow, Founder and President, Somali Woman Foundation, Chairperson of the Somali Olympic Committee and Somali Basketball Federation

Basketball became part of my life and it taught me valuable lifetime skills such as teamwork, discipline, and leadership. [...] Basketball gave me a huge opportunity to travel, to diversify, and to meet new people from Africa to the Middle East and beyond.

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

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