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PRESS RELEASE

UN Global Sports Programme Holds Discussion on Role of Youth in Preventing Violent Extremism through Sport During Counter-Terrorism Week

New York, 23 June 2023 — On the margins of the [United Nations Counter-Terrorism week](#), the Global Sports Programme led by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and its partners — the State of Qatar, the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), and the International Centre for Sport Security (ICSS) hosted a side event to discuss the role of youth in preventing violent extremism (PVE) through sport.

Sports has long played a significant role in spreading positive values throughout the world and across civilizations and cultures, particularly among youth. In this context, the event shed light on the collaborative nature of the efforts to prevent violent extremism through sport, by gathering member states, UN entities, athletes, youth representatives, regional organizations and media to address the pivotal role of youth and institutional cooperation in the use of sport for PVE.

During the opening session dedicated to the achievements and future goals of the UN Global Sports Programme, **Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism** highlighted the role of sport as a powerful tool for peace and development. *“Sport has immense potential in helping to build a lasting legacy of peace and positive values, which are critical for sustainable responses to terrorism and violent extremism.”* He further emphasized the capacity of youth as agents of change in their communities, stressing that *“Young people are critical to building resilient societies and ensuring lasting solidarity, through mechanisms such as sports, which push people to be better, aim higher and reach further.”*

During the second session, UNAOC, on behalf of Sports Programme partners presented the working document for the *Policy Recommendations on PVE-Through-Sport from a Youth Perspective*, which reflects the findings of a series of regional fora between youth leaders and senior policymakers to incorporate youth insights into the national action plans to address violent extremism using sports.

The event also featured a panel discussion on the [#MoreThanAGame Campaign](#) and on how to strengthen the crucial role played by youth in effective PVE policymaking between youth participants, representatives of the African Union Sport Council, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Fédération Internationale des Associations de Footballeurs Professionnels (International Federation of Professional Footballers - FIFPRO).

#MoreThanAGame was launched alongside the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar by UNOCT-led Global Sports Programme in partnership with Generation Amazing Foundation. The campaign is headlined by

professional footballer and UNESCO Ambassador Dr. Nadia Nadim and promotes the potential of sport as a force for good.

The UN Global Programme on the Security Major Sporting Events, and Promotion of Sport and Its Values as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism (“Global Sports Programme”) provides technical assistance to member states on how to incorporate sport values-based PVE initiatives in national strategies for preventing violent extremism. It also supports grassroots Civil Society Organizations in implementing community-level sport-for-PVE projects and engages with youth to ensure that their unique perspectives on PVE through sport are considered by policymakers.

UNOCT implements the Global Sports Programme in partnership with UNICRI, UNAOC, and the ICSS. The Programme is funded by the State of Qatar, the Republic of Korea and the People’s Republic of China through the United Nations Peace and Development Fund (UNPDF).

Additional Quotes:

Nihal Saad, Director, UNAOC: *“Youth’s unique and diverse actions in PVE through sport have made a valuable contribution to addressing the drivers of violent extremism. From grassroots initiatives to awareness-raising campaigns, young people’s efforts have transformed the lives of countless individuals. We need to invest more in these efforts to harness the full potential of youth in PVE policymaking.”*

Nasser Al Khori, Executive Director, Generation Amazing Foundation, and State of Qatar National Focal Point for the Global Sports Programme: *“At Generation Amazing, we are proud and honoured to play a part in the Global Sports Programme and collaborate in this shared goal of leveraging sports to promote inclusion, social cohesion, build resilience, and deter violent extremism, as well as advance the development and adoption of cutting-edge policies and practices to safeguard sports and major sporting events from extremist ideologies.”*

Antonia Marie De Meo, Director, UNICRI: *“It is evident that sport possesses an unparalleled ability to foster a sense of community, resilience, and unity. Nowhere is this impact more critical than in the lives of young people, who often face poverty and marginalization and may become susceptible to divisive narratives from extremist groups. Yet youth also bring promise, with their boundless energy, vitality, and passion to shape a better tomorrow.”*

Massimiliano Montanari, CEO of the International Centre for Sport Security (ICSS): *“Youth represents both beneficiaries and key players in making the outskirts of the world better places to live, and in mitigating or removing those factors which can push other youth towards violent extremism. It is, however, essential not to leave them alone. To this end, we need to promote long-term programmatic approaches and link as much as possible Sport for PVE initiatives to the larger development and peace agenda, in order to enhance their impact and sustainability.”*

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