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Sport for development and peace

United by our common goals: ensuring the impact of sport on sustainable development and peace

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [77/27](#), addresses the contribution of sport to the achievement of peace and the Sustainable Development Goals. It serves to describe progress towards the implementation of the United Nations Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace between 2022 and 2024. Based on inputs from leading global experts, Member States, the United Nations system and other stakeholders, the report is focused on progress made in five priority areas of impact: (a) social inclusion through sport; (b) physical activity, physical education and community-based participation in sport; (c) gender equality in and through sport; (d) peacebuilding and crime prevention; and (e) sustainable communities and climate action. Each section provides a review of progress over the past two years, highlighting gaps in implementation that prevent sport from being fully utilized as a tool for development and peace. A schematic overview of the global sport ecosystem is provided to deepen understanding of the multiple stakeholders engaged in sport and to highlight potential entry points and opportunities for strengthening the implementation of the United Nations Action Plan amid current global challenges. Lastly, the report contains strategic recommendations directed at the United Nations system, Member States and the global sport ecosystem to support the implementation of the United Nations Action Plan.

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** [A/79/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. As the Secretary-General noted in his remarks at the Munich Security Conference on 16 February 2024, the world faces a range of complex and interconnected challenges, including humanitarian tragedies driven by conflicts, persistent inequities within and between States, a worsening climate crisis, deep-seated health issues, economic instability, the risks of uncontrolled artificial intelligence and growing debt distress. The world of sport reflects many of these challenges and can also play a role in tackling them.

2. As requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 77/27, the present report provides a targeted review of the contribution of sport to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with particular attention to the annual high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. In the same resolution, the General Assembly encouraged Member States, with the support of the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders, to explore ways and means to integrate sport into various development objectives in the review and follow-up processes of relevant development frameworks and agendas.

3. Accordingly, the present report provides a review of progress towards the implementation of the update to the United Nations Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace.¹ The United Nations Action Plan includes recommendations for improving international collaboration around sport for development and peace policy and practice and provides a global framework for promoting and mainstreaming sport for development and peace. The United Nations Action Plan is well aligned with two major internationally agreed frameworks: the Kazan Action Plan² and the global action plan on physical activity 2018–2030.³

4. To support the preparation of the present report, an expert group meeting on transforming lives through sport was convened by the Division for Inclusive Social Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which has been entrusted with the substantive mandate on sport for development and peace. Through a series of structured discussions, experts from across the sport ecosystem contributed their knowledge and perspectives with respect to sport as a transformational power in people's lives and as an enabler of sustainable development and peace. Additional inputs were received from 26 Member States, 18 United Nations system entities and 22 other stakeholders, including reports on progress in implementing elements of the United Nations Action Plan during the period from January 2022 to February 2024.⁴

5. The present report also provides an overview of the global sport ecosystem and examples of sport for development and peace partnerships, policies and programmes based on the inputs received from Member States and other stakeholders. In the report, the challenges encountered in five priority areas of impact are identified, namely: (a) social inclusion through sport (Sustainable Development Goal 10); (b) physical activity, physical education and community-based participation in sport (Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 4); (c) gender equality in and through sport

¹ Available at www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/11/Updated-UN-Action-Plan-on-Sport-2018.pdf.

² Available at www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2019/07/KazanActionPlan.pdf.

³ Available at www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2019/09/WHO_GAPPA_2018-2030.pdf.

⁴ A total of 66 contributions were received. In December 2023, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs sent a note verbale to all Member States and a memorandum to all entities of the United Nations system requesting input for the present report. The submissions are available at <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/sport-for-development-and-peace>.

(Sustainable Development Goal 5); (d) peacebuilding and crime prevention (Sustainable Development Goal 16); and (e) sustainable communities and climate action (Sustainable Development Goals 11, 12 and 13). A set of recommendations for the sport ecosystem and its various stakeholders is provided to promote the integrated implementation of the United Nations Action Plan, address existing gaps in evaluation and monitoring and ensure the continuing contribution of sport to the achievement of sustainable development and lasting peace.

II. Global sport ecosystem

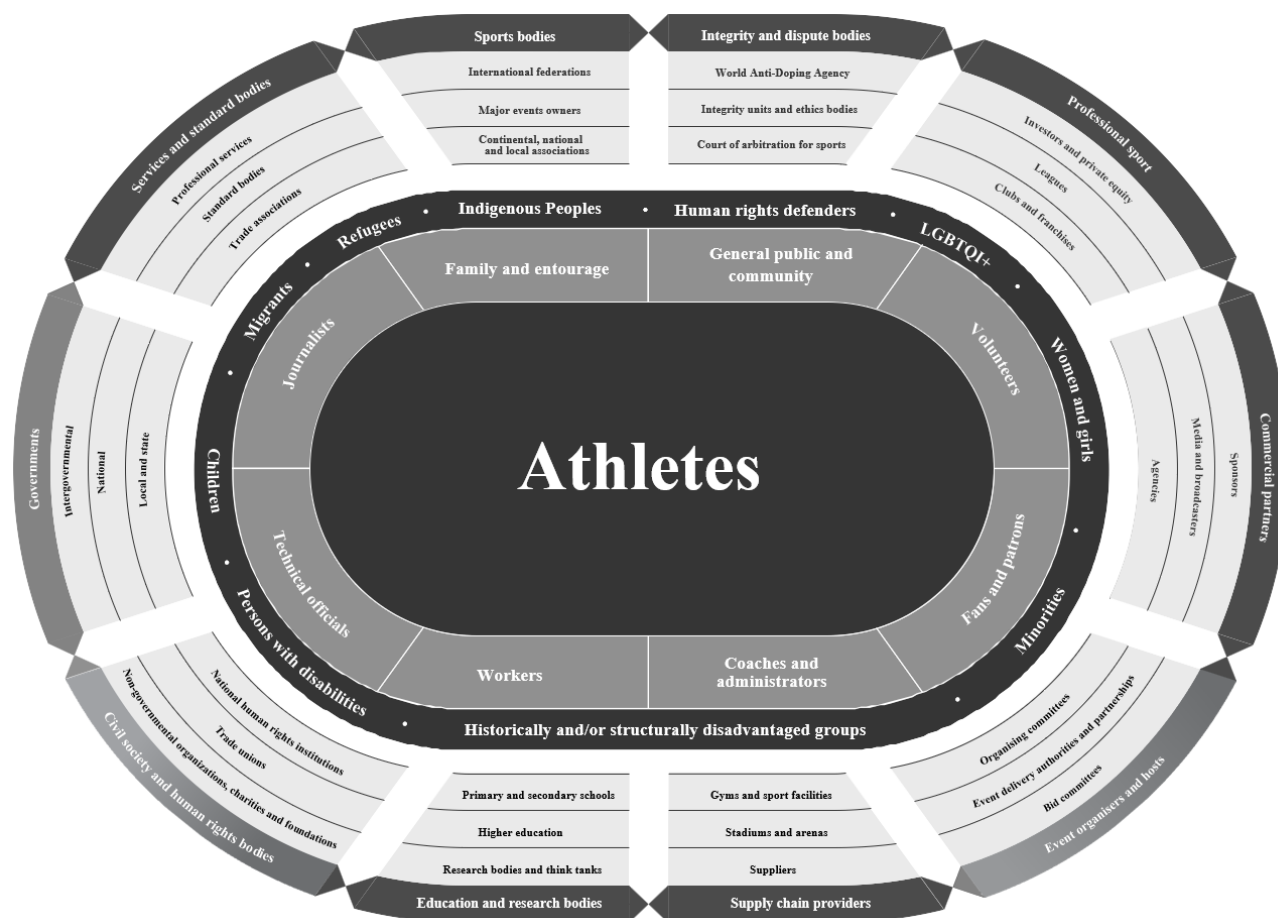
6. The global sport ecosystem is complex and made up of a wide range of stakeholders, including athletes, coaches and clubs (from the professional level through to the community-based level), sports business organizations, sport venues and the media, as well as supply chain providers and spectators and fans. This interconnected ecosystem can play a pivotal role in raising awareness of sport for development and peace, aligning the objectives thereof with the Sustainable Development Goals and shaping the culture of all those involved. While the global sport ecosystem is not governed by a single set of centralized rules or regulations, the fundamental principle of respect for human rights is embedded in all codes of sport (for example, via related United Nations resolutions⁵) and adherence to national laws is required.

7. To effectively leverage the contribution of sport to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is helpful to understand the ecosystem and stakeholders engaged in and through sport. In its resolution [77/27](#), the General Assembly encouraged Member States and other stakeholders, such as international sports federations, organizers of sport events, sports clubs and leagues, foundations and the private sector, especially businesses involved in the sports and development sector, “to continue and intensify their support for the work of the United Nations system on sport for development and peace, including through voluntary contributions and the establishment of innovative partnerships to advance policy and programme development in the field of sport for development and peace”.

8. The model of the global sport ecosystem (see figure I) devised by the Centre for Sport and Human Rights provides a human rights-focused, people-centred perspective of the sport ecosystem and shows the large number and diversity of organizations and people that contribute to it in their different roles and capacities. Identifying the stakeholders can help to better understand their contribution to the global sport ecosystem at the different levels and the interrelationships within the ecosystem. It can also help to identify new opportunities and changes needed to better position sport for development and peace programmes and policies to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

⁵ United Nations resolutions related to sport are available at <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/sport-for-development-and-peace/general-assembly>.

Figure I
Model of the stakeholders in the global sport ecosystem



Source: Centre for Sport and Human Rights, “Sports ecosystem”. Available at www.sporhumanrights.org/what-we-do/sports-ecosystem.

III. Progress and challenges in priority areas of impact

A. Social inclusion through sport

9. In the present section, the impact of sport for development and peace programmes and policies on social integration and inclusion is examined, as well as the existing gaps and challenges. It also provides a review of progress over the last two years in delivering initiatives aimed at implementing the United Nations Action Plan and increasing inclusion and participation in physical activity, quality physical education and community-level sports (Sustainable Development Goals 3, 4 and 10).

10. An inclusive society is one in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play.⁶ An inclusive society in which no one is left behind is stable, safe and just for all people, regardless of race, gender, class, age or location. At the community or grass-roots level, “sport for all” refers to activities

⁶ *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 96.IV.8), chap. IV, para. 66.

organized and practised not only for competition but also to promote health and social benefits.⁷

11. In its 2024 report entitled *The Social Impact of Sport: Unlocking the Potential of Sport to Drive Social Transformations*, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) analyses the social value and impact of sport, building on previous initiatives undertaken to measure the value and impact of sport. It is also noted in the report that existing aggregate evidence for some regions strongly supports the idea that investing in sport to achieve social objectives yields significant returns in areas such as health, education, peacebuilding and environmental sustainability. According to some studies, the return is over three times the original investment.

12. In this context, progress has been reported by stakeholders in the implementation of policies and programmes that are aimed at promoting social inclusion and reducing barriers to participation in sport. Set out below are examples of interventions implemented in the last two years that are focused on vulnerable populations, including women and girls, young people, older persons, Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities.

13. With the support of the Government of Italy, the Division for Inclusive Social Development implemented a project to promote the social inclusion of children and young people with autism through sports from 2022 to 2024 in Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Panama. The project was aimed at developing the skills of sport instructors to train young people with autism to improve their running and swimming skills. In total, approximately 90 trainers and 110 young people with autism were reached through the project.

14. During the Finance in Common Summit held in November 2020, the global network of public development banks established the Coalition for Sustainable Development through Sport to align financial flows with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. In 2023, the Coalition signed a joint declaration renewing its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals and announced that the Sport for Sustainable Development Summit would be held in July 2024.

15. Hosted by France and the International Olympic Committee, the Sport for Sustainable Development Summit was attended by over 500 participants, including Heads of State and Government and leaders of international organizations and public banks, who agreed on commitments related to education and employment, health and nutrition, equality and inclusion and sustainability and legacy. The Paris Agreement for Sport and Sustainable Development was issued with the support of more than 60 Heads of State and Government. It contains 10 commitments that are centred around the priorities of the Summit.

16. In addition, public development banks and other institutions united through the Coalition for Sustainable Development through Sport pledged to invest \$10 billion globally for community-based, inclusive and sustainable sport infrastructure by 2030. The French Development Agency committed to release €500 million for sustainable development in sport by 2030. The International Olympic Committee also announced a 10 per cent increase in its budget dedicated to Olympic Solidarity, amounting to \$650 million between 2025 and 2028.⁸

17. The Football for the Goals initiative, launched by the United Nations in 2022, has 282 members, including international confederations, football associations, national football leagues and civil society organizations. Through the initiative, the

⁷ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), document CIGEPS/2019/Statutes.

⁸ Sylvie Corbet, "World leaders pledge billions to sports and sustainability at pre-Olympics summit", *Associated Press*, 25 July 2024.

global football community is urged to work together to become agents of change by aligning messaging, strategies and operations with the aspirations of the Sustainable Development Goals.

18. Since 2017, the Olympic Refugee Foundation, established by the International Olympic Committee, with support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, has created programmes in nine countries, in partnership with private and public sector entities, including the National Olympic Committee of Qatar, the Ministry of Youth of Türkiye, Airbnb and the Right To Play organization. During the 2024 Olympics, 37 athletes living in 15 countries competed as members of the Refugee Olympic Team.

19. Through a UNESCO and Côte d'Ivoire initiative aimed at fostering harmony for solidarity within neighbourhoods, more than 20,000 young boys and girls were mobilized through football tournaments and education sessions to promote a culture of peace and social cohesion among young people.⁹

20. In Monaco, the Department of Education, Youth and Sport, in association with the Department of Cultural Affairs and a number of cultural, youth and sport organizations, has implemented the Pass' Sport Culture programme to promote culture among young people and their families and encourage them to take part in sport during the school holidays, to unite people regardless of their social backgrounds.

21. Together, the Oceania National Olympic Committees, International Olympic Committee, through the Olympism365 and Olympic Solidarity initiatives, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Sport for Development programme of the Government of Australia initiated the Oceania Sport, Equality and Inclusive Communities Impact Network, which is a network of stakeholders that work to ensure more women, girls and communities can reap the benefits of sport.

22. The Sport for One Humanity initiative, established by Turkish Airlines with the technical expertise of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, supports sports-based projects by civil society organizations that promote a culture of peace, mutual understanding and cooperation.

23. The Centre for Sport and Human Rights, in cooperation with the Government of Switzerland, has developed a playbook series to support and empower sport bodies globally to make robust human rights commitments.

24. The workplan on sport for the period 2021–2025, developed by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), serves to guide the sport sector in the region with respect to implementing policies and programmes to achieve the ASEAN Community Vision 2025. The workplan is aimed at fostering regional unity, youth leadership, community building and the potential of sport to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

25. The workplan for sport for the period 2024–2027 adopted by the European Union is focused primarily on integrity and values in sport, the socioeconomic and sustainable dimensions of sport, and participation in sport and health-enhancing physical activity.

26. In 2023, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development issued two guides¹⁰ to assist global sport, business and cultural event organizations and their

⁹ UNESCO, document CIGEPS/2024/Doc.2.

¹⁰ Available at www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/c7249496-en.pdf?expires=1723650127&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=925B44A8DC217CD204C48D7C90B55F4E and www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/e2062a5b-en.pdf?expires=1723650095&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=0C9B9DA36EBA5E3BB8B6BA7D0949431A.

stakeholders in monitoring, measuring and evaluating the social, economic and environmental benefits of the events that they organize.

27. The Peace and Sport organization based in Monaco, together with an international coalition, implemented the Peacemakers Project, through which mentoring was provided to 10 civil society organizations worldwide to scale up programmes that use sport to build a culture of peace. In Colombia, for example, 15 young adults became “peace educators” to implement structured sport activities for 200 children, aimed at transmitting skills to those children and changing their attitudes and behaviours so that they become actors of change and development.

28. These initiatives reflect the diversity of actors and stakeholders across countries and sports working to increase the opportunities for vulnerable and disadvantaged populations to participate in sport. Important disparities remain, however, and some experts have called for increased investments directed towards providing persons with disabilities with more opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity. Key obstacles to greater participation include poor accessibility of sporting facilities, a lack of suitable equipment, societal prejudice and discrimination, resource constraints, a lack of appropriately trained staff, poor awareness about the needs and interests of persons with disabilities, educational gaps, limited participation opportunities and health and safety considerations.

29. To ensure that all people can enjoy the benefits of participating in sport, more resources are needed to overcome the physical, psychosocial and emotional barriers faced by persons with disabilities. To enhance the role of sport as a tool for social inclusion, in particular for persons with disabilities, mechanisms are needed to strengthen coordination, knowledge-sharing, capacity-building and monitoring of the impact. One such mechanism that could be established, as advised at the expert group meeting on transforming lives through sport, is a global multi-stakeholder observatory or facility to support efforts to overcome systemic inequalities and prejudices hampering access to, and participation in, sport for persons with disabilities.

B. Physical activity, physical education and community-based participation in sport

30. Regular physical activity, physical education and community-based participation in sport can prevent non-communicable diseases and promote healthy lives and well-being in all phases of life. Normative and policy frameworks, such as the global action plan on physical activity 2018–2030 of the World Health Organization (WHO), contain policy recommendations and guidance for all countries to deliver a whole-of-system approach for increasing and ensuring inclusive participation in regular physical activity by people of all ages.¹¹ The Kazan Action Plan, adopted at the sixth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport, remains a fundamental and critical instrument for aligning physical education and sport policies with the Sustainable Development Goals.

31. Progress in the last two years includes the strengthening of global monitoring and tracking of policy and programme implementation, as well as the establishment of new networks and partnerships and implementation of responses to recommendations in the United Nations Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace. Examples of progress in these areas are provided below.

¹¹ WHO, “Physical activity”. Available at www.who.int/health-topics/physical-activity#tab=tab_1.

Global monitoring of physical activity

32. As called for in the United Nations Action Plan, the Kazan Action Plan and the global action plan on physical activity 2018–2030 and by a global coalition led by the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO, an indicator framework was developed to measure the contribution of sport, physical education and physical activity to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, with a core set of metrics to support the tracking and reporting of global progress.¹²

33. In its 2024 report entitled *Global Levels of Physical Inactivity in Adults: Off Track for 2030*, WHO published updated data on global levels of physical inactivity to report on progress towards the agreed voluntary global target of a relative reduction by 15 per cent in levels of physical inactivity by 2030. The report reveals that one out of three adults do not meet the recommended levels of physical activity, representing an increase of 5 percentage points since 2010. The results also show that while some countries are making progress, globally people are becoming less active and most countries are off-track in their efforts to meet the 2030 target.

34. According to the same report, disparities in levels of participation between women and men remain. New data also reveal that there has been a steep rise in the level of inactivity in adults who are 60 years of age in most countries. Given the ageing population and health benefits of regular physical activity across the life course, all stakeholders are called on to accelerate policy action. In the report, it is also recommended that all countries strengthen collaboration, in particular between the sport and health sectors, to implement known and effective policies and programmes at scale to support participation in regular physical activity and community-based sport. The findings of the report should be disseminated across the sport ecosystem to inform policymaking.

35. Updating global estimates on levels of physical activity in adolescents between 11 and 17 years of age remains an urgent task that must be carried out to support global monitoring of the United Nations Action Plan, the Kazan Action Plan and the global action plan on physical activity 2018–2030. Current data show that four out of five girls and boys do not meet the global recommendations and thus miss out on the multiple mental, physical and social health benefits.¹³ Furthermore, according to a report by UNESCO, two thirds of secondary school students and more than half of primary school students do not receive the minimum of between 2 and 3 hours of physical education per week. Only one third of students with disabilities have access to such classes. As such, five priorities have been set for Member States, namely: (a) implement effective physical education policies; (b) increase investment in physical education; (c) upskill physical education teachers; (d) promote equitable and inclusive physical education; and (e) enhance physical education curricula.¹⁴

Global monitoring of policy implementation

36. Global monitoring of the implementation of national policies to promote and enable more physical activity has been strengthened through the publication by WHO of the *Global Status Report on Physical Activity 2022*. Overall, the assessment revealed that progress on policy and programme implementation had been too slow and uneven between countries and across regions, and efforts were heavily affected

¹² Emma Sherry and others, *Measuring Alignment and Intentionality of Sport Policy on the Sustainable Development Goals* (Swinburne University of Technology, 2019).

¹³ Regina Guthold and others, “Global trends in insufficient physical activity among adolescents: a pooled analysis of 298 population-based surveys with 1.6 million participants”, *The Lancet Child and Adolescent Health*, vol. 4, No. 1 (November 2019).

¹⁴ UNESCO and Loughborough University, *The Global State of Play: Report and Recommendations on Quality Physical Education* (2024).

by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Results showed that more policies and programmes were reported in higher-income countries compared with middle-income and lower-income countries and across countries in Europe compared with Asia and Africa. The report concluded that there was a clear need for greater investment, stronger cross-sector partnerships and increased capacity within sectors to accelerate policy implementation in all countries, in particular in low- and middle-income countries.

37. The monitoring of progress within the sport sector has advanced with the launch of the Fit for Life scoping study by UNESCO. Launched in September 2022, the study is aimed at mapping and assessing existing data and measurement frameworks for sport and developing actionable recommendations. Early results showed that fewer than 50 per cent of States members of UNESCO have data on participation in sport that are readily available. Some of the key challenges identified included: data gaps and fragmented data; siloed approaches in the sector; a lack of an internationally consistent methodology to measure participation in sport; and a lack of clear assessments on how sport-based initiatives support national priorities. The recommendations contained in the scoping study will inform a global sport baseline study, which will be developed by building and expanding on the experience of UNESCO in measuring the state of physical education around the world through its quality physical education survey conducted in 2020.

38. Increasing participation in physical activity, physical education and community-based sport through policy implementation and strong partnerships can have a positive impact on health and social outcomes. The past two years have seen many developments at the global, regional and national levels, some examples of which are provided below.

39. The International Olympic Committee and WHO renewed their collaboration by concluding a new three-year cooperation agreement to address needs in the area of capacity-building, knowledge translation and the scaling up of effective community-based initiatives.¹⁵ The Community Sport and Health Cooperation Initiative, implemented by the International Olympic Committee in collaboration with WHO and the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health, will support the delivery and scaling up of community-based sport for development and peace initiatives through national collectives of health and sport stakeholders.¹⁶

40. In 2023, UNESCO launched Fit for Life, a global initiative designed to activate smart investments in and through sport to boost social and developmental outcomes. Endorsed at the seventh International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport, the initiative provides an implementation framework for the Kazan Action Plan encompassing policymaking, advocacy, capacity-building, knowledge creation and impact measurement. The Fit for Life Global Alliance of partners from the public and private sectors will support activity implementation, including events and advocacy campaigns, to support knowledge exchange, capacity-building and the development of a global framework of quality standards and guidelines to support the financing, development, delivery and evaluation of inclusive sport policy and practice.

41. At the seventy-seventh World Health Assembly in 2024, the resolution on strengthening health and well-being through sport events was adopted, in which States members of WHO were called upon:

¹⁵ WHO, “WHO and International Olympic Committee team up to improve health through sport”, 16 May 2020.

¹⁶ Nikolaj Gilbert, Oliver Dudfield and Fiona Bull, “Embracing community sport to promote global health”, *The Lancet Diabetes and Endocrinology* (July 2024).

To leverage the power of sport events and sport settings...to address broader public health challenges, such as health emergencies preparedness and response, noncommunicable diseases, violence and injuries, mental health conditions, social inclusion, and to improve societal well-being through collaboration with stakeholders, while addressing the risk of undue influences, through transparency and accountability measures, and the potential negative impacts on human health.

42. In 2024, the General Assembly adopted resolution [78/281](#), in which 25 May was declared World Football Day, as 2024 marks the 100th anniversary of the first international football tournament. The celebration of national days is intended to provide opportunities for countries to use and promote sport and physical activity.

43. Member States have implemented initiatives that leverage the education-sport for development and peace nexus in support of the Sustainable Development Goals and promote quality education and encourage physical activity among children and young people. With sufficient resources and innovative partnerships, sport for development and peace can support quality education as demonstrated in the examples below.

44. Qatar collaborated with WHO and the Fédération Internationale de Football Association to implement the Healthy FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 project. The project integrated initiatives promoting physical activity, healthy lives, mental health and well-being during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, with the aim of creating a public health legacy to inform the planning and hosting of future major sport events.

45. The UNESCO publication entitled *Sport Values in Every Classroom: Teaching Respect, Equity and Inclusion to 8–12 Year-Old Students* for teachers is a cost-effective toolkit that serves to promote student engagement and movement, while helping educators to inculcate respect, equity and inclusion. Since 2022, the toolkit has been mainstreamed in many national education programmes, including in Argentina and Bhutan. India is the latest country that is planning to incorporate the toolkit into teacher training programmes and roll it out in schools in 2024.

46. Laureus Sport for Good launched the Sport, Education and Sustainable Livelihoods in Africa programme, in collaboration with the International Olympic Committee through the Olympism365 initiative. Through the programme, stakeholders were convened in a series of consultations to better understand the value of sport-based education and intervention in Africa. As a result, \$1 million has been invested in the programme to be implemented from 2024 to 2026.

47. The Active Mauritius strategy implemented by the Mauritius Sports Council fosters the participation of all people, regardless of gender, race, disability, age and faith, through youth afterschool outdoor education programmes, ageing-well initiatives, walking clubs and fitness programmes for older persons.

48. Fiji and Samoa partnered with Oceania Rugby to design and implement the Get into Rugby PLUS programme for young people between 10 and 14 years of age in 13 schools. As part of the programme, participants were engaged in a process of critical thinking and reflection on such issues as gender, power relationships and healthy, respectful relationships. The programme was jointly developed and implemented by Oceania Rugby, UN-Women, Fiji Rugby Union, ChildFund Rugby and Lakapi Samoa.

49. Promoting regular physical activity is essential in improving the health and well-being of all. Quality physical education is a fundamental pillar for establishing lifelong values, skills and enjoyment, and community-based sport provides core local opportunities for people of all abilities to participate at all levels. Major sport events and their legacy programmes provide key opportunities to catalyse policies and programmes for lasting change. However, according to current trends, global levels

of physical activity and participation in sport are decreasing in many countries and overall global progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 3 is off-track. Strengthening the provision of opportunities for regular participation in physical activity, physical education and community-based sport by people of all ages and abilities remains a priority to improve the impact on health, well-being and sustainable development.

50. Capacity-building and securing resources to deliver and sustain sport programmes to improve participation in physical activity are issues that should be addressed by all stakeholders in the sport ecosystem. Opportunities exist to innovate and create impact across all settings, such as schools, workplaces and communities, to reverse the current global trends and ensure that sport is accessible for all.

C. Gender equality in and through sport

51. According to *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024*, progress towards the achievement of nearly three quarters of the indicators for Sustainable Development Goal 5 is off track. It is, however, a well-established fact that the participation and involvement of women and girls in sport is an effective enabler in the advancement of gender equality and can contribute to the achievement of the targets set out under Goal 5.

52. The leadership of women within the global sport ecosystem is fundamental to improving policies for women and girls, and progress has been made in that respect in recent years. At the international level, equal gender representation on International Olympic Committee commissions was reached in 2022, with the representation of women reaching a historic high that equates to a 100 per cent increase since 2013. At the national level, Governments have a role to play in promoting the leadership of women in sport decision-making.

53. Another indicator of gender equality is equal pay. However, as it stands, the global gender pay gap is approximately 20 per cent, meaning that women typically earn about 80 per cent of what men do for the same work.¹⁷ There has been some progress in reducing the prize money gap. In 2023, the prize money for the FIFA Women's World Cup was \$150 million, which is 300 per cent more than in 2019. The amount is still only about a third of the \$440 million that was awarded to men in the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. Additional evidence of the ongoing inequalities is the fact that there are no women in the 2024 list of the world's 100 highest paid athletes published by Forbes.

54. Providing safe environments and experiences in sport is critical to support women and girls and increase their participation. According to the World Players Association, 21 per cent of female athletes reported that they were victims of sexual abuse as a child, which is nearly double the rate for male athletes.¹⁸ Women experience violence not only at a young age, but at all levels of sport, as several high-profile cases at the professional elite level have demonstrated. When women athletes succeed, they may experience toxic abuse online and in the mainstream media, and when they speak out, too often they face severe retaliation. In that regard, UNESCO and UN-Women are aiming to support decision makers in Governments and sport organizations in tackling violence against women and girls in sport, and to improve

¹⁷ UN-Women, "Everything you need to know about pushing for pay equity", 22 February 2024.

¹⁸ World Players Association and UNI Global Union, *Census of Athlete Rights Experiences* (2021).

understanding of the problem and support the development and implementation of effective policies.¹⁹

55. In recent years, progress has been made in promoting, safeguarding and equalizing opportunities for women and girls to participate in sport at all levels, some additional examples of which are provided below.

56. During the 2024 Olympic Games, gender parity was achieved for the first time among athletes that were competing. In addition, equal airtime was allocated for men's and women's events during prime-time viewing hours and there were more women's and mixed events, thus offering more opportunities for women.

57. Developed within the framework of the Fit for Life initiative, the Sport and Gender Equality Game Plan is aimed at supporting decision makers in delivering evidence-based policies that address gender disparities. The Game Plan was prepared by various stakeholders in the global sport ecosystem to guide policymakers in supporting gender equality in and through sport. In the document entitled "Highlights: Sport and Gender Equality Game Plan – guidelines for gender-transformative sport policies and programmes", there are four calls to action, namely: (a) champion gender equality in sport leadership, governance and decision-making; (b) develop capacity and infrastructure to support gender-equitable sport participation; (c) commit to ending all forms of gender-based violence in sport; and (d) harness the power of sport to change attitudes, foster gender equality and empower women and girls.

58. During the FIFA Women's World Cup hosted by Australia and New Zealand in 2023, not only was a record level of attendance set, but the event also attracted a global viewing audience of nearly 2 billion people, thus demonstrating and underscoring the increasing popularity of and changing attitudes towards the participation of women in sport on the world stage.

59. All in Plus is a joint project of the Council of Europe and the European Union that is aimed at achieving greater gender equality in sport. The initiative revolves around three pillars: data collection and analysis; the creation of an online resource centre; and raising awareness through social media.

60. In tennis, all four major tournaments (the US Open Tennis Championships, the Australian Open, the French Open and the Wimbledon Championships) have agreed to equal prize money.

61. The Professional Squash Association and World Surf League have also equalized men's and women's prize money.

62. Fiji is the first Pacific island country to introduce a whole-of-government and whole-of-community, evidence-based, measurable and inclusive national action plan to prevent violence against women and girls for the period 2023–2028, with an emphasis on prevention. Sport is identified as 1 of 13 key influential settings for the prevention of gender-based violence in the plan.

63. In 2024, the International Olympic Committee launched the Olympic AI Agenda, the aim of which is to use artificial intelligence technology to monitor and automatically delete abusive social media posts. The technology was implemented for the first time at the 2024 Olympic Games to protect 15,000 athletes, safeguarding them from online violence.

64. With the support of the Clifford Chance Foundation, the Centre for Sport and Human Rights launched the Roadmap to Remedy project, which is aimed at improving the response to reports of abuse in sport. As part of the project, victims,

¹⁹ See UNESCO and UN-Women, *Tackling Violence against Women and Girls in Sport: A Handbook for Policy Makers and Sports Practitioners* (2023).

survivors and whistle-blowers across the globe were consulted to identify what needs to be improved in sport when it comes to investigating abuse, reaching determinations and resolutions and engaging affected persons in building longer-term solutions.

65. Introducing gender-balanced policies and initiatives in sport at all levels is needed to address key issues and make progress towards gender equality in sport and the achievement of the targets set for Sustainable Development Goal 5. While progress has been made to address the underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions, violence against women in sport and the issue of equal pay, much more remains to be done. Many countries and sport organizations at all levels do not have or have not yet implemented policies to adequately advance gender equity, meaning that there are still gaps in terms of opportunities for and barriers to the full participation of women and girls in sport at all levels. All stakeholders have a role to play in advocating for, investing in and implementing actions to achieve gender equality throughout the sport ecosystem.

D. Sustainable communities and climate action

66. Sport is a contributor to climate change, but it is also affected by the changing environment. There are many ways in which sport has been and will be affected by climate change and environmental degradation, including natural disasters such as flooding, warmer winters, which affect snow sports, increasing summer temperatures, which affect sport performance, and air pollution, which affect players and spectators, and low- and middle-income countries face a disproportionate impact. According to the World Meteorological Organization report entitled *State of the Global Climate 2023*, 2023 was confirmed as the hottest year on record. It is, however, possible to curb the long-term temperature rise by taking radical action that aligns with sustainable development.²⁰ The role of sport in this process is vital as it serves as a catalyst for action and is evidence of how, through demonstration and leadership, decarbonization is not only possible, but necessary and urgent.

67. The sport sector has made progress in recent years in developing frameworks for action and global collaboration initiatives, as illustrated by the examples set out below.

68. Under the Sports for Climate Action Framework, a climate action agenda has been developed in the sport sector. The Framework has a broad signatory base, which includes governing bodies, leagues, clubs and teams that convene on a regular basis to exchange best practices and build their capacity to enhance their climate work. Through the efforts of its over 260 signatories, the initiative is aimed at tackling climate change by utilizing the global popularity and influence of sport. In 2024 and 2025, the efforts of the signatories will be focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing resilience to climate impacts and leveraging their global influence to include stakeholders in sport and the sport community in the climate conversation and increase solidarity.

69. Together with the Sports for Nature joint initiative launched in 2022, the Sports for Nature Framework provides a game plan for the sport ecosystem to accelerate action for nature. The Framework brings together over 55 sports federations, leagues and clubs, which have committed to protect and avoid damage to important species and habitats, restore key ecosystems, create sustainable supply chains and educate and inspire the wider sport community to help to address climate change.

²⁰ United Nations, “António Guterres (Secretary-General) on the State of the Global Climate report launch”, video message, 19 March 2024.

70. At Loughborough University in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Sports for Climate Action and Nature research cluster conducts research and provides teaching on sport and climate action.

71. In recognition of the impact of sport venues on emissions, many stadiums are going “green” and becoming more eco-conscious and environmentally friendly.²¹ Set out below are some examples of progress made towards meaningful solutions over the reporting period.

72. In line with the Olympic Agenda 2020, it was planned that the 2024 Olympics Games would be responsible, sustainable and inclusive, with the carbon footprint half that of the previous Olympics. In the Legacy and Sustainability Plan, offsetting initiatives were included, such as investments in environmental and social projects globally. The Plan was also aligned with the Paris Agreement and it was planned that 95 per cent of the events would be hosted in existing buildings or temporary infrastructure.

73. The International Olympic Committee and Union of European Football Associations have developed sustainability strategies related to environmental protection, waste management and recycling, as well as sustainable transport, construction and procurement. As part of the Euro 2024 held in Germany, the Union of European Football Associations set up a climate fund, from which German amateur clubs are able to request financial support to invest in climate protection projects.²²

74. In Seattle, Washington, the Climate Pledge Arena is the world’s first net zero certified stadium, and in Amsterdam, the Johan Cruyff Arena is powered by green energy, generated by more than 4,200 solar panels on its roof, as well as a wind turbine and a large stadium battery.

75. While decarbonizing the sports industry is vital for sport organizations, they must harness their transformative potential to combat climate change by leveraging their extensive cultural footprint. By empowering fans to act, sport organizations can amplify their impact far beyond the operational aspects of sports.

76. As part of the Sports for Climate Action Framework, the Bigger than the Game survey was conducted and served to gather insights from 1,815 sports fans worldwide. The results show that 83 per cent of respondents believed that their favourite sports entities should take the lead by harnessing opportunities to participate in environmental initiatives. The feedback received from fans underscores the growing demand for climate action within the sport community, indicating that fans are eager for clubs to play a pivotal role in promoting and facilitating climate action. It is recommended that sport organizations at all levels establish channels through which they can listen to and engage with their fans in implementing climate action initiatives. In addition, to accelerate progress, sport organizations should assess their sustainability policies and practices regularly. Useful tools exist, such as the Global Sustainable Sport Sustainable Pillars of Sport, which were developed by combining existing global frameworks to produce a standard framework for assessment across seven key pillars: partnerships, participation, people, planet, power, profile and prosperity.

²¹ Will Henshall, “How sports stadiums are going green”, *Time*, 9 February 2024.

²² Union of European Football Associations, “EURO 2024 climate fund: apply from 8 January 2024”, 8 January 2024.

E. Peacebuilding and crime prevention

77. Notwithstanding growing evidence of how sport can support social development, it is still underutilized as a prevention tool as worldwide violence and crime rates remain high. Progress on many of the Sustainable Development Goal targets, including under Goal 16, has been insufficient (see [A/78/80-E/2023/64](#)). Many people engaged in crime and violence or affected by it are young men.²³ Youth violence, which often starts with hate speech, results in deaths, injuries, disabilities and long-term health consequences. It affects not only the victims, but also their families, friends and communities. According to WHO, youth homicide accounts for 37 per cent of the total number of homicides each year.²⁴

78. More efforts are needed to leverage the contribution of sport to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and to specifically use sport to create safer and more inclusive and peaceful communities. The present section is focused on the various aspects of peacebuilding and crime prevention through sport, including the need to promote fair play in sport and the need to address incitement to violence and abuse in sport settings and to use sport as an important vehicle in the prevention of violent extremism.

Preventing crime and violence through sport

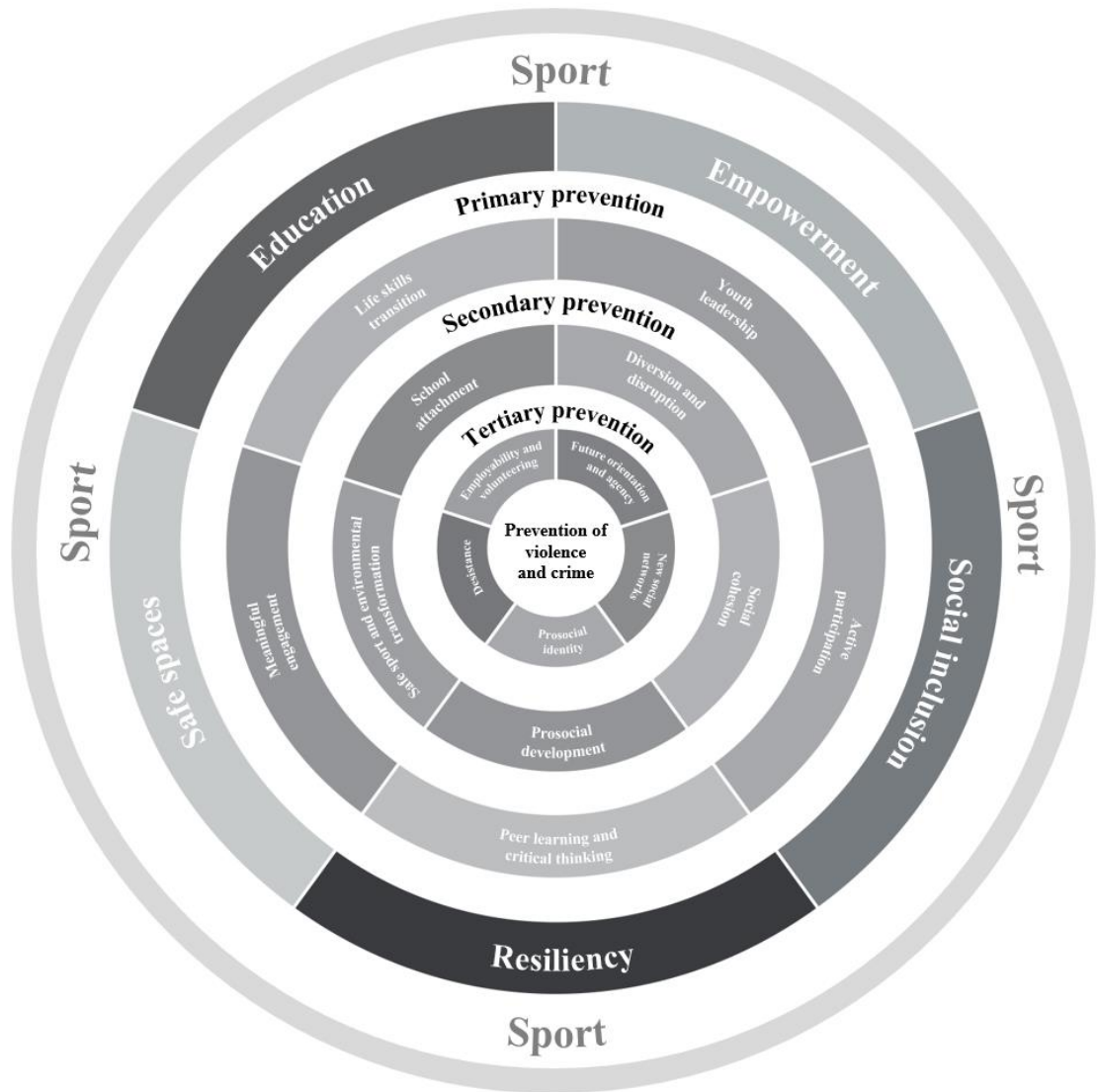
79. Communities affected by crime and violence can utilize sport for development and peace by integrating sport-based interventions into crime prevention and criminal justice strategies and programmes, with a view to strengthening known protective factors and addressing the risk factors of crime and violence, including hate speech, which can lead to incitement to violence and violent extremism, as well as the victimization of young people by organized criminal groups. Conversely, sport leagues, clubs and athletes can use their unifying power and community outreach to positively influence societies and help to prevent those risk factors.

80. In his policy brief entitled “A New Agenda for Peace”, the Secretary-General called on Member States to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to address the underlying drivers of violence and insecurity. To effectively harness preventative approaches, figure II shows how sport can be used to achieve prevention outcomes for youth violence and crime at the three levels of intervention.

²³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Global Study on Homicide 2023* (Vienna, 2023).

²⁴ WHO, “Youth violence”, 11 October 2023. Available at www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/youth-violence.

Figure II
Use of sport to achieve prevention outcomes for youth violence and crime



Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and International Olympic Committee, *Preventing Youth Crime and Violence through Sport: A Policy Guide* (2024).

81. More examples of how sport is harnessed for crime prevention are described below. For instance, as part of the Line Up, Live Up programme, UNODC offered 43 capacity-building and training events, for more than 1,200 coaches and trainers, youth workers and other practitioners, on the use of sport as a tool for youth crime prevention and supported the sport-based life skills training of over 31,000 young people in school and community settings, helping them to strengthen their resilience to violence, crime and drug use.

82. UNODC continued its partnership with the International Olympic Committee under a new joint initiative, Sport against Crime: Outreach, Resilience, Empowerment

(SC:ORE), for at-risk young people, which is aimed at developing new tools²⁵ in that field and enhancing the role of the sport for development and peace sector by promoting multisectoral approaches and partnerships. Promising crime prevention techniques include teaching young people life skills, such as effective communication, critical thinking, teamwork and problem-solving.

83. In the Game Plan, which is a plan of action to counter hate speech through engagement with sport, the development of which was led by the office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, the influence of sport to counter hate speech, while advocating for respect, inclusion and hate-free communities, is recognized. The Game Plan also contains recommendations related to public outreach, training and the localized implementation of the Game Plan, in coordination with the Eradicate Hate Global Summit Sports Working Group, which includes representatives of major sports leagues and clubs. In 2023, regional meetings to discuss the principles of the Game Plan were held by Liverpool Football Club and Boston Red Sox.

84. Since 2023, UNESCO has supported Côte d'Ivoire in strengthening its national anti-doping ecosystem and developing its first policy on ethics, values and integrity in sport, which is rooted in the principles of the Anti-Doping Convention. As part of the implementation of the policy, capacity-building is provided for stakeholders through a training and certification process. The collaboration has strengthened the country's institutional capacity to combat the use of prohibited substances and methods, both in sport and beyond, to tackle wider societal issues.

85. Through the collaboration between Central Queensland University and the Queensland Police Service, the Police-Citizens Youth Clubs provide young people from Indigenous communities with focused support services to disrupt and deter youth crime through targeted community re-engagement programmes, featuring sports including boxing, gymnastics and martial arts. The outcomes of the programmes include improved social and emotional well-being, increased confidence in staff members, youth participation and Indigenous young people feeling supported.

86. The Global Programme on Security of Major Sporting Events and Promotion of Sport and Its Values as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism, led by the Office of Counter-Terrorism and implemented in partnership with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and the International Centre for Sport Security, is aimed at encouraging Member States to leverage the power of sport to strengthen social cohesion and youth resilience for the prevention of violent extremism. Through the Programme, technical assistance has been provided to Member States with respect to security governance and the integration of sport in national prevention of violent extremism strategies; community-level sport-based prevention of violent extremism projects; and several knowledge products, such as specialized publications, including the *Guide for Policymakers for the Use of Sport for the Prevention of Violent Extremism*.

87. During the eighth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (General Assembly resolution [77/298](#)) in 2023, Member States, United Nations entities, regional and subregional organizations and relevant stakeholders were encouraged to involve young people in the promotion of peace and tolerance and interreligious dialogue, through sport and physical activities, to prevent and discourage their participation in acts of terrorism and violent extremism.

²⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and International Olympic Committee, *Preventing Youth Crime and Violence through Sport: A Policy Guide* (2024).

Addressing violence and crime through sport

88. Safe sport is focused on creating a safe sport ecosystem for all and is aimed at eliminating all forms of violence and harassment. The goal is to protect all athletes, in particular children engaged in sport, often through training programmes, procedures and policies. Many Member States are increasingly introducing codes, laws and policies to support the elimination of violence and harassment in sport. Some examples are provided below.

89. Malaysia has implemented the Safe Sport Code, which provides guidelines on the expected behaviour of athletes, referees, coaches, administrators and even parents. An array of partners at each level of the sport ecosystem are involved in implementing the Code to further ensure sport integrity.²⁶ The Code is aimed at addressing the issues of violence, harassment and bullying, as well as improving transparency and impartiality.

90. The International Olympic Committee announced the establishment of regional safeguarding hubs in Southern Africa and the Pacific islands.²⁷ Building on pre-existing initiatives, the hubs will collaborate with local organizations to provide athletes with psychosocial and legal support. Furthermore, under the guidance of the task force on international safe sport,²⁸ the hubs will draft an international safe sport framework.

Protecting sport from corruption and crime

91. Threats to sport include illegal betting and the manipulation of sporting competitions. Sport-related threats include those that are common across societies, such as money-laundering, fraud, illicit enrichment and bribery, but are present in the sport sector in contexts involving the transfer of athletes, administration of sport organizations and organization of sport events. The negative impact of those threats are multiplied exponentially when they are exploited by organized crime groups operating at the local, national and transnational levels.

92. The Programme on Safeguarding Sport from Corruption and Crime was developed by UNODC to support Governments and sport organizations in developing the understanding, capacities and collaborations needed to prevent, detect and investigate corruption and crime and sanction those involved.²⁹ Over the reporting period, UNODC organized or supported 42 activities at the national, regional and international levels, including awareness-raising and capacity-building activities, which benefited over 1,000 participants from more than 90 countries.

93. In the light of the challenges facing the sector, Member States, United Nations entities and other stakeholders in the global sport ecosystem are required to make policy changes to advance the peacebuilding capacity of sport. In the context of formulating an effective response to specific transnational crimes and corruption, promoting the development of specialized capacities and focal points is key.

94. Implementing a preventive approach to peacebuilding through sport for development and peace policies and initiatives can address the root causes of crime and violence. By using a youth-based preventive approach, sport for development and

²⁶ Olympic Council of Malaysia, “The OCM fully support the Safe Sport Code”, 15 March 2024.

²⁷ International Olympic Committee, “Establishment of regional safeguarding hubs in Southern Africa and the Pacific islands approved by IOC EB, groundwork laid for European safeguarding hub”, 13 October 2023.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ UNODC, “Safeguarding sport from corruption and economic crime”.

peace policies can serve to tackle social inequalities at their core, leading to greater social cohesion.

95. For sport to be an effective tool to advance social development and well-being, ensuring the protection of young people in sport settings is essential. A safe and “do no harm” approach should always be adopted. In the context of youth violence and crime prevention, having such an approach is especially important considering that many participants may be especially vulnerable or have experienced adverse childhood experiences. All programming aspects should be determined using a trauma-informed approach and on the basis of explicit and robust child safeguarding policies and practices.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

96. **As shown in the present report, the last two years have seen the further development of initiatives and partnerships aimed at strengthening the contribution of sport to development and peace. Although the initiatives reported on herein demonstrate progress at the global, regional and national levels across the core areas of the United Nations Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace, much more can and should be done. However, while it is important to increase the scale and impact of those efforts throughout the global sport ecosystem, it is also necessary to promote coherence and integration in the delivery of activities by various actors. The United Nations system can play a crucial role in that regard by promoting policies and standards that foster inclusion and equality and that leverage the power of sport to advance development and peace.**

97. **Given the challenges identified throughout the sport ecosystem and taking note also of those previously reported, some recommendations for the United Nations system and Member States and the global sport ecosystem are set out below. The effective implementation of those recommendations will require the collective effort of various stakeholders.**

98. **The following recommendations are made for consideration by the United Nations system:**

(a) **Update the 2018 United Nations Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace, including by:**

(i) **Conducting a comprehensive mapping and analysis of opportunities for innovation and expansion across the sport ecosystem;**

(ii) **Providing a reporting framework and mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the United Nations Action Plan through 2030;**

(b) **Strengthen collaboration, coordination and knowledge-sharing within and across the global sport ecosystem at all levels, including by strengthening the leadership and coordination role of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Inter-Agency Group on Sport for Development and Peace.**

99. **The following recommendations are made for consideration by Member States and the global sport ecosystem:**

(a) **Mobilize resources to strengthen the capacity of the Secretariat of the United Nations to:**

(i) **Support the coordinated implementation and monitoring of the United Nations Action Plan across the United Nations system;**

- (ii) **Strengthen normative and policy guidance on sport for development and peace;**
 - (iii) **Strengthen the available evidence of the impact of sport on the Sustainable Development Goals through the monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes using quantitative methods and disaggregated data;**
- (b) **Encourage and support countries to commit to the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework, including by:**
 - (i) **Reviewing, assisting with and strengthening the implementation of a human rights policy;**
 - (ii) **Establishing voluntary mechanisms to ensure due diligence with regard to monitoring and evaluation;**
 - (iii) **Promoting and supporting action in response to findings to prevent, mitigate and remedy rights violations and share lessons learned;**
- (c) **Perform a rapid stakeholder review to assess the needs and opportunities for accelerating progress on inclusivity in sport, including by:**
 - (i) **Conducting a scoping analysis of the potential contribution of a global observatory on sport and disability;**
 - (ii) **Strengthening coordination, knowledge-sharing, research and capacity-building on social integration and inclusion through sport;**
- (d) **Advocate for and mobilize increased investment through sustainable funding streams to implement sport for development and peace programmes and policies, with a focus on the delivery and evaluation of community-based programmes;**
- (e) **Develop and deliver training resources to strengthen capacities within the sport ecosystem, including for civil society organizations, social enterprises and volunteer networks that support inclusion and the implementation of sport for development and peace initiatives in local communities.**
