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Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
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联合国教育、
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18th International Congress "Integrity in Sport - Tools, Development, Structures."

Panathlon International

Siracusa, Italy, 18 – 19 May 2012

Opening Address

by

**H.E. Ms Katalin Bogayay
President of the General Conference**

Mr. Enrico Prandi, President of Panathlon International,
Mr. Sergio Allegrini, Secretary-General, of Panathlon International,
Mr. Luca Pancalli, Vice President, of the Italian National Olympic
Committee,
Distinguished Panathletes,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the leadership of Panathlon International for inviting me to this important gathering as the President of the General Conference of UNESCO. As you know, UNESCO has a unique mandate in sport and physical education within the UN family of organizations, and an active collaboration with global sports stakeholders and civil society organizations is one of the central features of UNESCO's strategy to implement this mandate.

As you gather today for the 18th time, to chart the future course of this very important organization, I would like to share with you the vision of UNESCO in regards to the promotion of physical education and sport, and the concrete actions that the Organization has been taking to turn this vision into a reality.

UNESCO was granted the mandate of the United Nations' lead agency for Physical Education and Sport in 1952 and since then, has brought together governments, NGOs and private sector to facilitate the sharing of experiences, advising on sports policy formulation and guiding the elaboration and implementation of training systems and sport development programmes around the world.

At the intergovernmental level, UNESCO promotes sports and physical education through such unique platforms of international cooperation as the International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS), which was created to facilitate intellectual and technical exchange in the field of physical education and sport. It is important to note that the fifth edition of the Conference – MINEPS V – will be held from 28 to 30 May 2013 in Berlin, Germany. The programme will focus on inclusion, increased public investment in sport and physical investment and preserving the integrity of sport.

It is clear that such an agenda cannot be tackled without the comprehensive engagement of experts, civil society and the sport movement in addition to governments and UN agencies. In this regard, I invite all of you here today to reflect on potential contributions you can make to the preparatory process and to attend this important event.

Another important and unique international platform in sports is the Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport (CIGEPS), established to promote the role and value of sport and its inclusion in public policy. CIGEPS is comprised of expert representatives in the field of physical education and sport from 18 UNESCO Member States, each elected for a four year term. It includes representatives of the International Olympic Committee, and other sport-related organizations or NGOs which represent international interests.

UNESCO encourages government to make sufficient investment into Sports. There is a growing body of evidence that sport can deliver benefits across a wide range of social issues. The most obvious is the role of sport in promoting healthy lifestyles, and the associated social and economic benefits. The World Health Organization has stated that investment in sport will yield three times that investment in medical costs savings. Any sensible investor, seeing a 300% potential profit should jump on that investment!

It is unequivocal that a lack of physical activity not only causes significant health problems but has a manifold social impact. Many parts of the world are enduring the dual epidemics of obesity and diabetes, which can be directly attributed to a lack of physical activity. These are issues of concern for the individuals themselves and society as a whole, particularly in terms of social security and the burden on healthcare systems.

Today, we know that the global decline in physical education provision is contributing to increasingly sedentary lifestyles, particularly among youth. As such, more and more children are spending their time indoors isolated and without contact with society. Moreover, a lack of physical activity impacts upon a child's ability to learn and absorb other studies within an academic environment, as the combination of physical activity with that of numeracy and literacy provides a child with a well-rounded education.

But the value of sport and physical education extends much beyond health. Formal and non-formal sport education has proven to be particularly successful in breaking down gender stereotypes, promoting positive values, building social cohesion and driving holistic youth development and participation in public, political and community life.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sport is an important learning tool for young people. Playing games and sport gives an opportunity to children to learn important values as well as to engage in teamwork and cooperation. These lessons help to shape attitudes and provide models of good conduct that last a lifetime.

Values such as honesty, respect, courage, commitment and solidarity have special relevance to sport. However, sport also draws heavily on the concept of fair play. Fair play means more than simply the absence of cheating. It means conducting oneself in accordance with what the sport values, even when the rules do not specifically require it. Fair play, therefore, may be seen as an embodiment of a commitment to justice and fairness. Precisely because of this, I was delighted to be present at the Annual World Fair Play Award Ceremony of the International Fair Play Committee which took place only couple of weeks ago in my native city, Budapest. I am very much looking forward to building closer ties between UNESCO and such important partner organizations as the Fair Play Committee and Panathlon International.

Dear Participants of the Congress,

Let me give you some of the concrete examples of how UNESCO promotes positive values through sport and uses sport to attain greater objectives of peace, social cohesion and sustainable development.

Responding to a call from Member States of CIGEPS, UNESCO is launching a research project, in partnership with other UN agencies, to demonstrate that physical education and sport are essential 'public goods' worthy of public investment.

The planned research addresses the lack of awareness regarding the tremendous social and economic returns from increased public investment in sport programmes at a regional, national and community level. The research will capture the broad based benefits of sport in a succinct economic analysis targeted at Ministries of Finance, since they hold considerable sway over discussions within governments, in particular over the allocation of financial resources.

In order to address the mounting challenge of obesity, non-communicable disease and inactive lifestyles, UNESCO is developing International Indicators on Quality Physical Education. The project primarily aims to improve physical education policy and delivery around the world and, as such, will inform discussions during the fifth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials responsible for Physical Education and Sport to be held in 2013.

Sport has proven instrumental in promoting gender equality – one of the two global priorities of UNESCO and a major objective of my Presidency. Inspired by the existing data and good practice examples, UNESCO will launch a new project in 2012 designed to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through sport, targeting young marginalized women living in the slum districts of Nairobi. Comprising innovative educational modules, participants will be supported to understand their rights and responsibilities, to participate actively in their communities and to make informed decisions. The two year pilot will be initiated in Kenya with the aim of replication across the Great Lakes Region.

Another example of sport's potential in community development can be seen in UNESCO's partnership with European Athletics. The collaborative project – Young Leaders Forum, focusing on the development of leadership skills through athletics, promotes youth civic engagement to around 100 participants, aged 18 to 26. The physical Forum is supported by an online platform and community of young leaders which guides members in how to design, develop and implement community projects. The development of these projects encourages youth entrepreneurship and endows the young leaders with organizational and managerial experience for the future. The next edition of the UNESCO-EA Young Leaders Forum will be held in Helsinki, Finland in June 2012.

It is also important to understand the mobilization potential of sport. Apart perhaps from music, there is no better way to attract the attention of young people and to engage them civically. Sport projects and programmes targeted at youth can lead to a reduction in negative patterns of behaviour by increasing self-confidence and self-respect which enhance integration and inclusion. UNESCO's partnership with The Association for International Sport for All – TAFISA, is a prime example of this. The key activity is the implementation of the UNESCO-TAFISA “Volunteer Initiative for Peace through Sport” project. It aims to foster peace through education and development initiatives designed for local people, particularly young volunteers, to aid integration, socialization, sustainability, health and economic stability.

Moreover, a key element of UNESCO's partnership with TAFISA is the organization of the World Sport for All Games, held every four years. The Games provide a unique opportunity for the public to engage and discover traditional and contemporary sports from around the world in a spirit of solidarity and friendship. Among other initiatives, TAFISA will launch a new project in 2012 in the Philippines - Project HOPE, designed to help overcome psychological effects of typhoon Sendong through sport. This initiative has been specifically designed to leverage the affiliation of youth and sport to provide young people with psychosocial support and overcome the trauma they have experienced during the typhoon, an approach advocated by UNESCO.

UNESCO has also run a pilot project in Mozambique to mobilize youth through physical education and sport activities, which aim at raising HIV/AIDS awareness. The objective of this youth-to-youth project was to raise awareness for the devastating consequences of HIV/AIDS. The existence of cultural barriers and taboos in several countries does not allow parents and young generations to discuss certain health issues. Therefore, this project uses sport as a form of preventive education on HIV/AIDS, by providing the space for information and discussion on the pandemic and by promoting a change in young generation's attitude towards the disease.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me congratulate Mr. Enrico Prandi, President of Panathlon International, and Mr. Sergio Allegrini, its Secretary General, on this very important occasion; I am sure that the implacable organization of this Congress will be the foundation for fruitful debates and deliberations throughout its duration.

And let me congratulate all of the participants for playing an essential role in promoting peace and understand among the peoples of the world through sports!

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