

STATEMENT BY MR. SHRIPAD YASSO NAIK, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND
MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 45 [A] & [B]: SPORTS
FOR PEACE FOR DEVELOPMENT AT THE 62ND SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 31, 2007

Mr. President,

We thank the Secretary-General for his report on 'Sport for development and peace: progress and prospects'. We note the well-organized structure and good presentation of information in the report. The report provides an overview of activities undertaken on various fronts by Member States, the UN system, and other stakeholders. It also makes recommendations for next steps based on lessons learnt.

Mr. President,

India supports the efforts of the Secretary-General to highlight the useful role that sports can play in consolidating peace and furthering development. Sport is an easy and relatively inexpensive way of engaging the energies of the youth in a positive and constructive manner. It teaches the spirit of sportsmanship that generates tolerance of spirit and action and respect for the opponent. It also inculcates discipline through observance of the rules of the game. It develops camaraderie and good-fellowship that enhances the ability of communities to co-exist peacefully.

The contribution of sports in furthering development is also recognized. A healthy mind lives in a healthy body. Sports provide physical activity, enhances oxygen intake and improves stamina. It brings people together for a common purpose. Its enjoyable format provides a good vehicle for propagating difficult social messages. Sports improve productivity and foster social harmony and discipline. Indeed, sports can play a subtle, positive and constructive role in development and peace.

Mr. President,

India believes that activities related to sports and physical education are a necessary component of human resource development. India has a long tradition of sport and physical education. Ancient Indian scriptures and literature describe the important place of such sports as archery, weight-lifting and wrestling in princely

education. A mastery over such sports was considered as important as the knowledge of scriptures. Education in modern India is trying to continue and build upon this heritage and respect for sports and physical education.

In view of the key role of sports and games in national life, the Government of India has taken a number of initiatives to improve the standard of sports in the country. There is wide recognition of the need for broad-basing sports and for provision of modern sports infrastructure. The Government has made efforts towards upgrading the skills of the coaching fraternity, creation of sports infrastructure and building an adequate sports-science backup. Efforts are also being made to encourage the National Sports Federations to make their functioning more effective and focussed. The involvement of the society at large, particularly business and industry, are adding to the efforts of the Government. To encourage sports and sportspersons, a number of prestigious awards are bestowed on sportspersons to recognize their achievements. Several schemes have been put in place to propagate sports and to provide incentives for sporting activities. These include schemes such as the Sports Fund for Pensions for Meritorious Sportspersons, as well as Promotion of Sports and Games in Schools. While the welfare of young sportspersons is covered by the Sports Scholarship Scheme, a National Welfare Fund has been established to assist retired sportspersons. A National Sports Development Fund has been set up to mobilize resources. The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in the Government of India has the national level responsibility for sports. The Government has also established the Sports Authority of India to pursue the twin objectives of broad-basing of sports and nurturing talent in children through the provision of necessary infrastructure, equipment, coaching and other facilities. These include a Sports Medicine Centre and Dope Control Centre.

Mr. President,

We agree with the Secretary-General on the need to enhance the use of sports to help reverse disease and obesity, especially among young people. The report speaks of the role of sports in reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS. While sports may have only a limited role in this regard, the promotion of sports can play a more critical role in reversing the growing trend of juvenile diabetes in urban areas. Regular practice of a sport can also help lower anxiety and high blood-pressure caused by the pressures of modern living amongst the younger generation of today.

We note from the Report of the Secretary-General that despite uneven progress, there is evidence indicating a better integration of sports across all geographical regions. However, the report highlights that the lack of adequate resources, facilities and trained personnel continues to be a key constraint in many countries. Developing countries have to deal with enormous challenges with limited resources. These challenges are even more daunting for the LDCs. The complexion of sports has undergone a transformation in the modern world. The pursuit of sports today requires the availability of modern and highly sophisticated equipment, infrastructure and training. The ready availability of and easy access to such facilities in the developed world loads the international sporting arena towards the

developed world. There is, thus, a solemn need for international cooperation and assistance for encouraging the development of sports infrastructure in developing countries.

In this context, we agree with the recommendation of the Secretary-General on the need to make sport and physical education more accessible to larger segments of the world's population, especially those who lack the opportunity and facilities. We also agree with the need to promote investment for expanding sports infrastructure and facilities, including through enhanced resources, sports science and sports medicine programmes, particularly in the developing world. We support the Secretary-General's call for greater efforts for promotion of sports and physical education. This could include advocacy through participation in sports and non-sport events. We are convinced, however, that sporting activities are also the best advocacy tool for the promotion of sports. We hope that the UN system would focus its efforts on promotion of sports through sports, rather than through conferences and meetings.

Mr. President,

Sport is an inalienable part of the educational process and a factor for promoting peace, friendship, cooperation and understanding among peoples. We agree with the Secretary-General that sport and physical education are not luxuries in society and much less so in the developing world. We must, therefore, invigorate our efforts for the promotion of sports for development and peace.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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