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New York

President: Mr. Kutesa (Uganda)

In the absence of the President, Ms. Gunnarsdóttir (Iceland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

“sport, as a tool for education, development and peace, can promote cooperation, solidarity, tolerance, understanding, social inclusion and health at the local, national and international levels” (*resolution 65/1, para. 67*).

Agenda item 11

Sport for development and peace

Report of the Secretary-General (A/69/330)

The Acting President: Earlier this year, the international community commemorated the inaugural International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, proclaimed by the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. This first commemoration was an opportunity to celebrate the many contributions of sport to peace and development. Indeed, the Assembly has long recognized the virtues of sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace. From 1993, with its resolution calling for the first time on the observance of the Olympic Truce, to the 2004 proclamation of the First International Year of Sport and Physical Education, the United Nations has continued to elevate the status of this important subject.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1) further underlined the potential of sport to foster peace and development and to contribute to an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding. This message was further reaffirmed in 2010 in the outcome document of the High-level Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, recognizing that

From the first Olympic Games in Greece to the large sporting events drawing an international and diverse audience today, sport has always captivated the human mind. With its universal language, sport brings people together across cultural and political boundaries and around shared values of effort, solidarity and respect for others. Sport not only promotes healthy lifestyles, it also fosters perseverance, team spirit and inclusiveness.

Since the Olympic Truce was first established in the ninth century in Greece, we have seen many examples illustrating the role of sport in creating bridges between divided communities, supporting reconciliation and fostering peace.

Over the past two decades, the United Nations and partners worldwide have committed to mainstreaming sport into social policies. From the United Nations Development Programme matches against poverty to initiatives promoting gender equality in sport, from athletes speaking out against discrimination to the inclusion of people with disabilities, sport has proven to be a powerful channel to promote development, poverty eradication and social inclusion.

The report of the Secretary-General before us today (A/69/330) describes many of these initiatives, undertaken by Member States and the United Nations system. I look forward to hearing members' views on

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how we can further explore the contributions of sport to advance our efforts to bring about a more peaceful and prosperous world.

Mr. Rahimov (Azerbaijan): At the outset, on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan, I extend our greetings to all delegations and wish them continued success in their endeavours.

Today is a great day for sport and peace, and we welcome this opportunity to address the General Assembly.

Sport is among the key factors contributing to promoting education and development among individuals and societies at large. By teaching respect for the equality of people, tolerance and excellence through fairness, sport can have a positive impact on social inclusion and cohesion. This important potential has to be harnessed.

We welcome the work of the United Nations aimed at mainstreaming sport in the policy agenda and enhancing its impact on development. In this regard, we highly appreciate the work of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, Mr. Wilfried Lemke.

We recall the General Assembly's landmark resolution 64/3, of 19 October 2009, which conferred observer status on the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Under the able leadership of the IOC President, Thomas Bach, himself an Olympic champion, we are well placed to effectively promote the Olympic ideals and values.

The collaborative efforts of all relevant organizations and agencies, including the IOC, to enhance a policy-oriented and advocacy-focused approach, especially in the context of ongoing work on the post-2015 development agenda, are of critical importance.

Policies and partnerships are a critical requirement for success at the national level as well. The Government of Azerbaijan has made the promotion of sport one of our national development priorities. This year we are celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, which was established within 18 months of our independence. We have been steadfast in mainstreaming sport into our development strategies and in positioning our country as a sporting nation. In addition, our country has gained significant experience

in hosting major events – not only at the European level, but also at the level of world championships.

Promoting sport as a means of education, health and development also fully corresponds with and underpins our State policy on youth. Today our population has a median age of 30 years. Youth make up 40 per cent of our population and remain our top priority. Targeted policies to ensure inclusive recreation, sport and culture programmes are considered to be factors contributing to the success of our national youth team, which was ranked among the top 10 teams at the Second Youth Olympic Games, held this summer in Nanjing, China.

Building sporting infrastructure is central to providing opportunities for exercise and physical health and to fostering a culture of sport in society. Over just the past 10 years, we have put in place more than 50 world-class facilities throughout the country. That sporting infrastructure provides access to facilities to all our people at absolutely no cost. The opportunity to participate in sport at no cost has greatly enriched the lives of all of our people, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), the total number of whom remains among the highest in the world.

In April, our national Generations For Peace volunteers, working with the United Nations Development Programme and UNICEF, kicked off an awareness-raising initiative on the role of sport as a tool for peace to benefit vulnerable groups, including refugees and IDPs.

We welcome the designation of 6 April as the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, in accordance with resolution 68/9. The Day has been included in the official calendar of the Ministry of Youth and Sport, and we have already held numerous sporting competitions in collaboration with various federations and organizations.

International sporting events are an important practical tool, not only for identifying talent and for winning but also for facilitating dialogue, understanding and tolerance among nations. In that regard, I would like to recall the remarks of the Secretary-General on the eve of the Second Youth Olympic Games:

“Sport has a very unique and extraordinary power to bring people together, to drive social change and to bridge the gap between and among different ethnicities and religions and people and traditions – these are what the United Nations aims to promote and achieve.”

That view further cemented our own long-standing goals and ambitions, and we are deeply committed to achieving those objectives. Over recent years, Azerbaijan has also positioned itself as a destination for many sporting competitions. Along with world sporting events, regional sporting events are among our top priorities.

At this time, our greatest challenge lies just 236 days from now. It is my pleasure and honour to inform the Assembly that our nation will host the inaugural European Games from 12 to 28 June 2015. That was a historic decision, as the continents of Africa, the Americas and Oceania and Asia have a long history of continental games in their respective regions. In that respect, we commend the visionary approach of Mr. Patrick Hickey, President of the European Olympic Committees. The population of our young independent nation welcomed the decision as a source of joy and pride. Over the 17 days of competition in June 2015, more than 6,000 athletes from Europe will compete in 20 sports, in a spirit of peace, fairness, friendship and unity. While having had little more than two years to prepare for the Games, our country is determined to do its best.

We place the utmost importance on that event and have nominated the First Lady of Azerbaijan and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Mehriban Aliyeva to lead our organization. It is with a great sense of honour and responsibility that the people and Government of Azerbaijan are working to make that event a success.

In observance of resolution 68/9, entitled “Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal”, it is important and appropriate to continue to encourage Member States, especially in this era of new and global challenges, to observe, both individually and collectively, the principle of the Olympic Truce during the inaugural European Games next year.

In 2016, we will host the forty-second World Chess Olympiad. In 2017, we will host the fourth Islamic Solidarity Games and, just last month, we were successful in our bid to host the Union of European Football Associations Euro 2020 tournament. We believe that such events will further strengthen friendship, solidarity and intercultural dialogue, and we are pleased and honoured to contribute in a truly tangible way to demonstrating the potential of sport to contribute to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

I take this opportunity to encourage all Member States to visit our country and see at first hand sport in action for development and peace.

Mr. Khiari (Tunisia): It is a pleasure to see you, Madam, presiding over our meeting today.

(spoke in French)

At the outset, I would like to thank you, Madam, for your statement, which in my view comprehensively covers the major points that we will debate here today regarding the collective action carried out in the United Nations system and elsewhere aimed at attaining our shared goals of using sport as a tool for promoting development and peace.

I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for the quality of his report entitled “Sport for development and peace: realizing the potential” (A/69/330), which gives a comprehensive overview of activities, including programmes and initiatives implemented by Member States and by the funds and programmes of the United Nations, specialized agencies and other partners, including the Olympic Movement. We welcome the activities undertaken by the United Nations system, including the Office on Sport for Development and Peace, over the past year.

In that regard, I would like to express our appreciation for the tireless and continuous efforts of Mr. Wilfried Lemke, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, and we pledge our full support to his Office’s efforts to ensure the success of sport promotion programmes throughout the world.

Sport is traditionally regarded as a key element in establishing the norms of responsible behaviour in a society, playing thereby a very special role in maintaining a healthy social fabric. It goes without saying that access to sport is a fundamental social right and a factor in social integration and development, as well as a tool for promoting exemplary values and a solid education for our children and young people.

I would therefore like to reiterate the determination of Tunisia to continue in its efforts to make sport, by virtue of its potential for communication and reconciliation, a powerful vector for integration and development at the national, regional and international levels, and a way to promote solidarity, tolerance and the richness of cultural and human diversity.

I would also like to express our appreciation for the interest shown by all Member States in sport and for their commitment to its universal character as a tool for promoting peace, development, education and health.

I wish to take this opportunity to welcome the commemoration on 6 April of the first International Day of Sport for Development and Peace. The Day served as an opportunity to promote, at the global level, the role of sport in promoting a peaceful society and the use of sport and physical activity as tools for development and peace.

I take this opportunity to welcome the signing in April of the memorandum of understanding between the United Nations and the International Olympic Committee calling for the strengthening of efforts to promote sports-related initiatives that encourage economic and social development and for increasing the number of partnerships agreed among various United Nations bodies and the International Olympic Committee.

I also welcome the success of the Olympic and Paralympic Games held in Sochi, which consolidated the observance of the Olympic Truce and the ideals of the United Nations and the Olympic Movement, namely, friendship among peoples, harmony, non-violence and non-discrimination. The Games also clearly highlighted the unifying nature of sport and its catalysing character, generating friendship and sportsmanship among athletes and fans, whatever their origins, affiliations or beliefs. I would also like to thank Brazil, the Republic of Korea and Japan for their commitments to host the next Olympic Games in 2016, 2018 and 2020, respectively.

Given the noble nature of sport and its vital contribution to the emergence of new generations eager for good physical and mental health, Tunisia wishes to take this opportunity to urge Member States to ensure that education on sports ethics is disseminated among young people through the educational system and through associations and organizations of civil society, so that arenas and sports events are not used for the expression of slogans drawn from the lexicon of racism, xenophobia and the rejection of the other.

In order to continue the current momentum and to make sport a means for promoting universal principles in the service of future generations, my country reiterates its willingness to work with all stakeholders to advance the noble values of sport as a means of bringing together cultures, fostering social inclusion

and achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda currently being negotiated in this forum.

Ms. Picco (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): This year has seen two high-level events – in the Russian Federation, the XXII Winter Olympic Games and the XI Paralympic Games in Sochi, and in Brazil the International Federation of Association Football World Cup – that were able to bring the world together to share the passion and friendship that only sports can make us feel. The feat of self-transcendence and the power of sport prevailed in that context and were able to offer, if only for a moment, an opportunity to realize something to which we all aspire in this Hall – the values and principles that unite us.

With that in mind, the first observance of the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace was also held this year. In many cities, events were organized to highlight the power of sport to transcend our differences, promote tolerance and understanding and set the target of the inclusion of all. The active participation of United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme and UNESCO, as well as messages from the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace, summarized the power of sport in the following terms: respect and the promotion of dialogue and non-discrimination; the preparation of children and young people for life; the ability to include everyone, regardless of their abilities; achieving equality between the sexes; and improving physical and mental health.

In Monaco, the Department of National Education, Youth and Sport, in close partnership with the Princess Charlene of Monaco Foundation and the Peace and Sport Organization, organized the Princess Charlene of Monaco Rally, which consisted of two sporting events and one intellectual event and brought together 400 students, who competed in the spirit of teamwork and solidarity, testing their endurance.

The first celebration of the International Day was also an opportunity for the signing of a memorandum of understanding to strengthen the already strong cooperation between the United Nations and the International Olympic Committee (IOC), a collaboration designed to take advantage of the potential of sport for development and peace. We share the convictions of the International Olympic Committee and its goal of placing sport in the service of the harmonious development of

humankind with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.

I would therefore like to officially welcome the appointment of Mr. Jacques Rogge, former IOC President, to the position of Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Youth Refugees and Sport. Sport as a tool to empower young displaced people and refugees can contribute to prospects for peace and reconciliation, but also to health, education, gender equality and social inclusion in battered communities. Recognizing the role played by sport in achieving the Millennium Development Goals will lead us, as of next year, to give sport the place it deserves in the post-2015 development agenda, emphasizing, in particular, its multidimensional impact and taking into account the United Nations Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace.

At the national level, the Principality of Monaco focuses on various areas where sport and physical activity can contribute to development. These include sport and health, by educating students about Alzheimer's disease through a walk in partnership with the Monegasque Association for Research on Alzheimer's Disease; sport and prevention, by establishing lifeguard and first-aid training in sports and physical education classes taught by instructors from the Monaco Training Centre for First Aid and Water Rescue; sport and disability, by educating students about accessibility for people with disabilities, focusing on interaction through sport with young adults with disabilities; and, finally, sport and childhood, by giving students the opportunity to participate in no-finish-line running in physical education and sport classes, in partnership with the Monegasque Children and Future Association, in order to raise funds for the association. Monaco remains convinced that sport as a vector of values, opportunities and openness can make a crucial contribution to giving needy children access to a healthy lifestyle, while promoting their integration into their community.

UNICEF's efforts that focus on the integration of sports and games into the country programmes warrant our support. Its regional initiative "Vamos jugar" in Latin America and the Caribbean puts to good use the momentum from the World Cup 2014 and the upcoming Olympic Games in 2016 in encouraging communities to provide sports facilities that are safe and accessible to all.

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child will certainly provide a unique opportunity to promote such programmes. In that spirit, Monaco's Department of National Education, Youth and Sport will organize on 20 November, which is the anniversary of the adoption of the Convention, a symbolic march for the children of the world.

In concluding my statement, I would like to thank the Secretary-General and the Special Adviser and his Office for their leadership.

Mr. Roet (Israel): On behalf of the State of Israel, I would like to thank the United Nations Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace, Mr. Wilfried Lemke, for his tireless work in fostering dialogue and partnership.

Israel believes that sport nurtures mutual understanding and coexistence and is therefore proud to co-sponsor the related draft resolutions.

There are countless examples of the way in which sport can foster peace and enable development. From Costa Rica to Cameroon and from New York to New Delhi, sport is building bridges between people from different countries, cultures and communities. Throughout the world, disputes and disagreements are being set aside and common ground is being found on dusty lots and inside grand stadiums. By playing together, people learn from one another, and in the process greater understanding is fostered.

In August, some 80 Israeli and Palestinian students arrived for this season's opening training session at the Peres Center for Peace football programme. Just a few days after the summer conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza ended, Israeli children and Palestinian children came together to play football. The coach of the Palestinian squad, Ahmed Al-Jericho, said,

"Our children think only of football. They love to play football. They do not care if it is with Jews or non-Jews. They are kids, and all they care about is living together in peace."

Thousands of children from all backgrounds and religions overcome the barriers of language and culture through programmes like the Peres Center's football programme. Former Israeli President Shimon Peres, for whom the Center is named, said:

“You will spread word of the games and of peace – shalom, salaam – instead of confrontations. Everyone loves to play football, regardless of religion or nationality. You need peace and you will carry the message of peace.”

Nowhere is that more evident than on Israel’s national sports teams, where Jews, Arabs, Muslims and Christians all share the same uniform. They play together, win together and lose together. That is the power of sport.

The same power can be seen in Rwanda. The country is known as the land of 1,000 hills, and every hill seems to hold a 1,000 cyclists delivering food, firewood and coffee. Travelling through the country, one sees that many of the bikes were fashioned out of simple planks of wood. Ten years ago, a charity called Project Rwanda began providing thousands of new bikes to Rwandans. The organization also established an annual race that drew hundreds of people from different tribes to ride together. A movement was born, and 2007 saw the creation of the first Rwandan national cycling team, composed of both Hutu and Tutsi riders. They have proven the power of sports to unite people and overcome ethnic and cultural differences.

While sport should be immune to politics and immune to racism, that has not always been the case. During the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, which featured the slogan “The Happy Games”, Palestinian terrorists killed 11 Israeli athletes, coaches and referees. Under the interlocking rings of the Olympic banner, hostility took the place of international harmony. The memory of that dreadful day is still fresh in my mind. As a young boy, sport was to my mind magical, and the “Happy Games” were the high point that I had been anticipating for weeks. After the Munich massacre, sports and the Olympics were never the same in my mind.

I am sad to say that not enough has changed since then. Israeli athletes still have to contend with discrimination. This year, our tennis players were excluded from a tournament in Dubai; athletes from Tunisia, Kuwait and Iran refused to participate in fencing and judo tournaments with Israelis; and one of our soccer teams was attacked by a mob that stormed the field during a friendship match in Austria. For sport to be a tool that can better the world, we cannot ignore the racism and hate that sometimes erupts in arenas and stadiums. Whether it is racist chants, taunts, ugly gestures or the racist “quenelle” salute, there must be a

zero-tolerance policy towards racism. There is no room for any sort of prejudice, politics or racism in sport. It is our duty to protect and promote the fundamental values of teamwork, fairness and mutual respect. Let us work together to cultivate a culture that unites us rather than divides us.

Mr. Stone (Australia): Australia is committed to the principles of sport for development and peace and to the role that the United Nations can play in furthering those principles. We welcome the Secretary-General’s report on the subject (A/69/330) and would like once again to thank the Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace, Mr. Wilfried Lemke, for his ongoing efforts to promote the United Nations work in the field of sport for development and peace. We would also like to thank Monaco and Tunisia for co-chairing of the Group of Friends of Sport for Development and Peace and for their facilitation of the biennial draft resolution (A/69/L.5), which Australia is pleased to co-sponsor.

Sport’s popularity, its capacity as a communication platform and its ability to connect people, both within and between communities, make it a tool that can be used to meet a range of development challenges, including meeting the Millennium Development Goals. Australia, with a reputation as a sporting nation, is well placed to use sport as a vehicle to contribute to targeted development outcomes. Over the past five years, the Australian Government has committed \$49 million to development through sports programmes. Our approach to sport for development first identifies development challenges, and then determines how sport-based activities can help meet those challenges. In the Pacific, working in partnership with Governments and non-governmental organizations, we have identified non-communicable disease prevention and enhancing the lives of people with disabilities as priority areas.

The Australian Sports Outreach Programme works in seven Pacific countries to deliver grass-roots level sports programmes in those priority areas. Recently released independent research on the Programme, commissioned by the Australian Government, provides compelling evidence of the value of sport as a development approach. In Vanuatu and Nauru, sport programmes are contributing to greater inclusion of people with disabilities in community life by helping to build the confidence and self-esteem of people with disabilities, providing opportunities for them to interact with their families and communities, and contributing to

breaking down barriers and changing negative attitudes. Community activities are being modified to encourage greater participation by children with disabilities. Children are motivated to join the programmes after seeing other children with disabilities playing sport and being encouraged by parents, friends and volunteers. As a result, the children have increased their self-efficacy and confidence and have expanded their social networks. The parents and caregivers of children with disabilities have described an increase in awareness of their children's capabilities after watching them play sports. For some parents, that meant that they felt more engaged with their children. All parents believed that village attitudes had changed for the better, once people saw children with disabilities playing alongside those without.

To combat non-communicable diseases, the Australian Sports Outreach Programmes in the Pacific have promoted an increase in physical activity through participation in sport. The evidence presented from research indicates that when used strategically, sports programmes can make a measurable contribution to reducing some of the major risk factors of non-communicable diseases by making people aware of the risks of physical inactivity and providing them with opportunities to be more physically active, which has a positive impact on other health-related behaviours, such as improved diets and reduced smoking and drinking. The research has also shown the importance of getting women involved in community-based sports programmes. Research has shown that vegetable consumption has increased and the consumption of tobacco, alcohol and sugary drinks has decreased. That is an important finding, given the key role that women play in Pacific households.

Along with non-communicable disease prevention and enhancing the lives of people with disabilities, the development through sport programmes also play a role in improving social cohesion by bringing people in communities together in a positive way and by positively engaging young people and helping them learn important life skills, including leadership, teamwork, respecting rules, discipline and perseverance.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour and a privilege for me to take part in today's debate. At the outset, I would like to welcome the efforts made by Her Excellency Ms. Isabelle Picco, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Monaco, and His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Khaled Khiari,

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Tunisia, as co-facilitators of the draft resolution on sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace (A/69/L.5). We are also pleased to co-sponsor that draft resolution, which we hope the General Assembly will adopt by consensus.

Since the dawn of human civilization, sport has always contributed in a significant way to resolving differences and bringing together points of view and countries. Sport has a unique ability to attract, mobilize and inspire people around the world. It knows neither geographic nor social boundaries. It is a powerful factor for social inclusion and flourishing, which makes it possible to strengthen relationships and to promote the ideals of peace, fraternity, solidarity, non-violence, tolerance and justice. Sport is also a highly effective tool for achieving development goals in the areas of health, education, development and peace.

Morocco would like to pay a special tribute to all the international organizations that promote the role of sport around the world and welcomes the actions of the International Olympic Committee and the International Paralympic Committee to promote and strengthen a culture of peace based on the spirit of the Olympic Truce.

My delegation also welcomes the declaration by the General Assembly of 6 April as the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, aimed at marking the contribution of sport and physical activity to education, human development, healthy lifestyles and the building of a peaceful world.

At the national level, my Government has developed a national policy in the field of sport and development. Since 2008, Morocco has had a new strategy in place to anchor sporting practice and its values in the daily lives of our citizens, confirm that sport is a fundamental right and an important element of social integration, and expand access to sport, while boosting sports associations. That reflects the steadfast will of His Majesty the King to give strong impetus to development dynamics by using sport as a fundamental element for the development of the personal skills and abilities of young people, who have always been among the strategic priorities for the Kingdom in terms of education, training, access to labour markets, participation in political life and contributions to economic, social and cultural fields.

Since his accession to the throne, His Majesty King Mohammed VI has paid great attention to sport in its various forms, launching numerous sports infrastructure projects and contributing to the overall development dynamics of the Kingdom. During a national sport conference held in October 2008, the Moroccan sovereign designated sport as a fundamental right:

“Today, sport is becoming one of the fundamental rights of humankind. It is therefore necessary to expand access to sport for men and women from all sections of society, without distinction, in all regions and disadvantaged areas, and to include persons with special needs. Sport is, as such, a strong lever for human development, inclusion, and social cohesion and for fighting against poverty, exclusion and marginalization.”

As a result of the royal interest in the development of sport, Morocco today has the right to be proud to be one of the few countries in the world whose Constitution enshrines sport as a right of citizenship and a lever for human development in harmony with the profound changes in the country in various political, economic and social fields.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate my delegation’s commitment to strengthening, through sport, international brotherhood, friendship, goodwill and unity among peoples, for there is no better way than sport to inculcate and encourage the values of respect, diversity and tolerance between communities, civilizations and cultures. In addition, peace and non-violence are among our core values.

Mr. Gupta (India): On behalf of the delegation of India to the United Nations, it is my honour and privilege to participate in this debate today and share our views on agenda item 11, entitled “Sport for peace and development”.

At the outset, we welcome the Secretary-General’s comprehensive report on the subject (A/69/330) and compliment all Member States and entities of the United Nations system for taking concrete steps to promote sport for development and peace since the previous report, in 2012.

India welcomed the observance of the first International Day of Sport for Development and Peace on 6 April this year. We firmly believe that that new commemoration on the international calendar will

further promote sport as a catalyst for bringing us together.

The United Nations in its annual reports has consistently highlighted that participation in sport is a fundamental human right and is essential to the healthy development of children. Sport is about participation, inclusion and bringing people together by highlighting what they hold in common. Sport offers us an avenue to learn skills such as discipline, confidence and leadership. Tolerance, cooperation and respect for others are also fostered through the positive interaction that we experience. In addition, sport empowers individuals and helps foster self-esteem. We therefore believe that sport can bring people together towards a common goal, while promoting respect and cooperation, and at times even facilitating the resolution of conflicts with lasting peace.

The father of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi once said:

“When we play, we make mistakes, and when we make mistakes, we learn. Freedom holds no value unless we have the freedom to err.”

Against that backdrop, the exemplary work being done by Coaches across Continents deserves special mention. The innovative use of football in Uganda to reintegrate former child soldiers into their communities by teaching them life skills, health, wellness, education, empowerment and conflict resolution is indeed praiseworthy. That allows for rehabilitating interaction among them and enables them to seek a solution together as a team, without the use of violence.

The recognition by the United Nations of sport as a fundamental human right is the right step forward, given its enormous positive impact on health, not only for children but also for adults. The rise of obesity and the spread of lifestyle diseases, particularly cardiovascular diseases and diabetes, make participation in physical activity a critical necessity.

India is going through a period of rapid urbanization and a consequent loss of open green spaces. Against that background, fostering a culture of healthy lifestyle through regular physical exercise is also recognized by our Government as a national health priority. In that regard, the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, in his address to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session stated:

“We need to change our lifestyles. Avoiding energy use is the cleanest option and would give a new direction to our economy. For us in India, respect for nature is fundamental and an integral part of spiritualism ... Today, I would like to underscore that yoga is an invaluable gift from our ancient tradition. Yoga embodies unity of mind and body, thought and action. It is important to coordinate all of those aspects. Such a holistic approach is valuable to our health and our well-being. Yoga is not just about exercise; it is a way to discover the sense of oneness with oneself, the world and nature. By changing our lifestyle and creating consciousness, it can also help us deal with climate change. Let us work towards adopting an international yoga day.”
(A/69/PV.15, p. 18)

While India is considered to have been the birthplace of innumerable sports since ancient times, yoga offers a holistic approach to health and well-being globally and is one of the several concrete manifestations of globalization that, through the exchange of best practices, promote better individual lifestyles that are devoid of excesses of all kinds. The Indian delegation has since initiated steps to have 21 June declared as the International Day of Yoga at the United Nations, and, given its widespread recognition and popularity, we urge all Member States and observer States, along with United Nations agencies, to join in making that initiative of our Prime Minister a success.

The transformation of sport as a global industry has also provided considerable scope for economic development and employment-generation in several developing countries. While the Olympic Games and other continental games have consistently promoted economic engagement, India has also experienced a recent spurt in domestic sporting engagements. The development of the Indian Premier League has been a huge success and has transformed cricket's popularity and visibility. Today it is India's most profitable and popular sporting league and has generated employment and revenues for upcoming athletes/players, sporting associations, companies and all stakeholders. India is now using that format to encourage traditional sports like Kabaddi and other modern established sports such as badminton and hockey. The gradual transformation of sports as popular entertainment is also aiding the growth of the sporting goods industry, not just domestically but also globally, thereby building a direct connection between sports and economic development.

In view of the United Nations designation of sport as a fundamental human right, we have also taken several concrete measures to popularize sport and ensure the greater participation of young people. In taking forward the initiative and by building upon the popular collegiate sports format that is prevalent globally, the Association of Indian Universities and TransStadia have signed a 10-year alliance agreement to restructure and popularize a sports ecosystem. TransStadia and the Association of Indian Universities aim to give further impetus to the spirit of peace, education and development through sport. It provides an excellent platform for aspiring young sporting talent to prove its mettle.

My delegation also commends the city of Sochi, Russia, for having successfully organized the XXII Winter Olympic Games and the XI Winter Paralympic Games. We also congratulate Brazil for successfully hosting the superb sporting spectacle of the 2014 World Cup of the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) and Germany for being its much deserving winner. We would also like to express our appreciation for FIFA's gesture of pledging \$450,000 to help fight Ebola, an example of sport working for the benefit of humankind.

We would also like to take this opportunity to compliment UNICEF for having designated, last year, the Indian cricketing legend Sachin Tendulkar as their first brand ambassador for South Asia to promote hygiene and sanitation in the region. We are confident that the association of such inspirational sporting icons with those worthy causes will act as a force multiplier for getting young people motivated to work for UNICEF's success in the region.

Our appreciation must also be extended to the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace and the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General for highlighting the importance of sport and for using it as a medium for furthering the cause of peace and development. Please rest assured of our Government's steadfast support for the success of that initiative.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Sport is a universal language for human interaction. It promotes the strengthening of understanding among peoples and intercivilizational comity. International sporting cooperation can play an important role in overcoming national and religious enmity and in countering the ideologies of intolerance.

That is especially relevant these days when, faced with globalization and the consequences of various crises on both an international and a regional scale, we are witnessing greater social, cultural and national tensions, religious discord and outbursts of extremism.

In such conditions, it is more important than ever for the international community to continue its efforts aimed at turning sport, which has such a huge unifying potential, into an engine for comprehensive socioeconomic development and a means for achieving solidarity, tolerance and cultural diversity. At the same time, we are forced to note an alarming trend towards the erosion of one of the basic principles of the international sport movement, namely, the principle of sport beyond and above politics. Today, we are all witnesses to quite obvious attempts to use major international sports events and sport as a whole as a lever for exerting political pressure and for promoting the latest interests of the day. In such cases, the international community faces the task of having to work harder to preserve and strengthen sport's unifying mission.

We highly value United Nations activities aimed at enhancing international sports cooperation and promoting strengthened understanding among peoples and civilizations. The United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace plays a key role in that regard. We consider the Office to be an important structure within the United Nations system for the strengthening the use of sport as an advocacy tool for the Organization's objectives, mission and values. In that context, we note, in particular, the Office's contribution in assisting the work of the Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group. Russia, as a co-chair of one of its thematic subgroups, intends to continue to actively cooperate on sport with our partners within the framework of the Working Group.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, Mr. Lemke, and the President of the International Olympic Committee, Mr. Bach, for their support for the Russian efforts in preparing for the Winter Olympics and Paralympics in Sochi. The praise we received from those distinguished and universally influential sports officials confirms that what we managed to do was not done in vain. The Sochi Games made a substantial contribution to popularizing the international Olympic Movement, which was demonstrated by the unprecedented number of Heads of

State and Government and supporters from 126 States who visited Sochi and by the record broadcast audience ratings.

The 2014 Games were also unique in terms of their contribution to the development of world sport. The Sochi Olympics and Paralympics saw the participation of a record number of athletes. For the very first time, top medals were won by representatives of 21 States. With regard to the infrastructure inherited by the Sochi area, it includes an operational major winter sports training centre.

The Sochi Paralympics left a special legacy by giving momentum to the creation in Russia of an environment of access for all within the framework of the State's equal access programme. Olympic ideals will be promoted by the creation of a Russian international Olympic university in Sochi, which has already started training officials for the organization of major sports events, including the Olympic Games.

As in the past, we are ready to continue constructive international sports cooperation with our friends throughout the world and to organize major international sports events and forums in our country at the highest possible levels.

Mr. Singer (United States of America): The United States would like to thank Monaco and Tunisia, the co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of Sport for Development and Peace, as well as the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, Mr. Wilfried Lemke, for their work in supporting sport's role in furthering development and peace.

The United States is home to a vast array of sporting communities and activities. Americans of every identity and background participate in sport, from backyard play and little leagues all the way to professional and international competition. That diversity and universality of participation is what makes sport the opportunity to advance development and peace. Part of what makes sport so important is that it promotes inclusiveness, bringing together people of different ages, race, religion, social status, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity. Sport crosses all segments of society and is instrumental in empowering people of diverse backgrounds and identities, while fostering tolerance and respect for all people, no matter what they look like, where they worship or whom they love.

The United States recognizes that sports diplomacy is a valuable means for strengthening cultural relations among nations. Through our SportsUnited programme, thousands of people from over 100 countries have participated in sports and cultural exchanges. SportsUnited engages people from around the world in four key ways. The Empowering Women and Girls Through Sports initiative seeks to increase the number of women and girls worldwide involved in sport and to foster greater academic success, stronger leadership skills and improved health. The Sports Envoy Program makes use of senior athletes to conduct team-building exercises overseas and engages youth in a dialogue on the importance of education, positive health practices and respect for diversity. The Sports Visitors Program gives young people an opportunity to travel to the United States and discover how success in athletics can be translated into the development of life skills and achievement in the classroom. And the Sports Grants initiative focuses on empowering athletes with disabilities and underserved youth.

Sport provides a universal language that contributes to educating people on the values of respect, diversity, tolerance and fairness and is a means to combat all forms of discrimination and promote social inclusion for all.

Mr. Ismail (Brunei Darussalam): Brunei Darussalam fully supports agenda item 11, "Sport for development and peace". We also recognize the significant role and positive impact of sport in contributing to development and peace. In that regard, we have had a national sports policy in place since 1989 that identifies sport as one of the crucial elements and most effective means for enhancing the quality of life. We believe that sport can be an effective tool in getting people to communicate, understand one another and form friendships across nations and boundaries, and can, in the long run, bring about peace and harmony. We are also convinced that development of that kind will ensue, not just at the national level, but also in the world at large.

In Brunei Darussalam, we encourage everyone's participation in sports activities, including youth and the elderly. Our target includes having at least one sports facility located within two kilometres of each populated area. We now have 673 sporting facilities with 140 football fields, 200 outdoor and 260 indoor sports facilities, 60 jogging tracks, and 13 public swimming pools. Physical education has always been part of our national education curriculum. Our schoolchildren and

youth are not only highly active in sports competitions across the country, but have also participated in regional and international tournaments. We are also proud to now have a good representation of female athletes, instructors, coaches and sports administrators. At present, females in Brunei Darussalam account for almost 60 per cent of our national athletes. They represent the country at numerous subregional, regional and international sporting events, including the 2012 London Olympics.

Our National Plan of Action on Persons with Disabilities seeks to promote and protect their rights and enhance their full participation in society as part of our efforts at inclusiveness. The Plan of Action is carried out in close collaboration with both the private sector and non-governmental organizations to ensure inclusiveness and allow our people to reach their full potential. Our national sport events have also stressed the rights of all people to participate, and our first athlete with disabilities took part in the London 2012 Summer Paralympic Games.

In commemorating the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace on 6 April this year, Brunei Darussalam organized, for the first time, a nation-wide sporting event, with the collaboration and participation of our national sports associations and bodies. Our objective was to inculcate the spirit and value of sport for all, equality and non-discrimination, fairness, integrity, tolerance, respect and mutual understanding.

Additionally, we have two ongoing programmes in relation to sport for development and peace that especially focus on our youth, who make up more than 50 per cent of our population. The first is the Hassanal Bolkiah Trophy for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Youth Football Championship for under-21-year-old players. The initiator of that tournament, His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei Darussalam, encourages young athletes and sports enthusiasts from Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries to come together to uphold the spirit of sportsmanship and form bonds of friendship.

The tournament also seeks to promote greater understanding and contribute to the maintenance of a harmonious ASEAN community in South-East Asia. Another programme is the annual five-day National Youth Challenge, which is aimed at cultivating the values and spirits of sport among our young people from an early age. That programme brings together youth from various backgrounds. Team-building exercises

through community service, such as helping the poor, the elderly and people with special needs, form part of its activities.

Brunei Darussalam welcomes the recent establishment of the Commonwealth Youth Sport for Development and Peace Working Group, which emphasizes youth development. In that regard, we have established two communication platforms, the first called Planning for the Youth, By the Youth, the second being the National Youth Dialogue, whereby the Government takes young people's views into account in promoting healthy lifestyles, sports volunteerism and the sports industry.

The importance of sport for development in social harmony and economic progress is also upheld. To that end, our Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Development, as well as the private sector, have been working hand in hand organizing national and regional sporting events to promote healthy lifestyles.

Brunei Darussalam welcomes the sharing of best practices in sport for development and peace programmes with other Member States. We believe that they will develop, enhance and strengthen our relations with other Member States, and unite the world community through social lifestyles, youth development and peace and by fostering sustainable development.

Ms. Almeida Watanabe Patriota (Brazil): As a long-standing sponsor of the annual draft resolution on sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace, Brazil is committed to promoting sport as an instrument for development and peace.

Sport is deeply rooted in the Brazilian culture and society. Our Constitution recognizes the practice of sport as a fundamental social right, in line with the UNESCO International Charter of Physical Education and Sport, which declares that sport and physical education is a fundamental right for all. Moreover, the Brazilian Government firmly believes in the potential of sport as an important factor for social inclusion, poverty reduction and sustainable development. The General Assembly's resolutions and the Secretary-General's reports on the issue have rightly recognized the role of sport as a means to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We also believe that sport will be equally instrumental in promoting the post-2015 development agenda.

Brazil also sees sport's potential to foster peace and unity. In that context, we recall the historic match between the Brazilian and Haitian national football selections in August 2004, when, responding to an invitation from the Prime Minister of Haiti, the Brazilian national team travelled to Haiti to play a Game for Peace, as it was called. The parade of Brazilian athletes along the 15-kilometre route to the stadium was followed by thousands of Haitians, who for some hours put aside their differences and united around a common goal. The episode had long-lasting effects and produced a communion of interests, as well as joy and peace, in a moment of political tension and instability. That illustrates how politics and sport, history and solidarity can coexist.

Brazil is currently in the middle of a sport-centred decade. We hosted the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) Confederations Cup in 2013 and the FIFA World Cup earlier this year. In September 2015, Brazil will host the first World Indigenous Games and the Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games in the following year.

The decision to put forward its candidacy to host those large sporting events is consistent with the priority Brazil accords to the promotion of sustainable development and social inclusion. In order to prepare for them, the Government has been paying special attention to the human, social and development dimensions they encompass. Brazil is an advocate of the potential of sports to end discrimination. Together with FIFA, we worked towards a World Cup that could convey a strong message against discrimination and intolerance, under the campaign entitled "Say No to Racism" that was carried out during the World Cup.

Brazil was part of the core group that presented resolution 24/1, entitled "Promoting human rights through sport and the Olympic ideal", to the Human Rights Council at its twenty-fourth session, in September 2013. It had more than 130 sponsors and was adopted by consensus. The resolution recognizes sport as a universal language that has the potential to contribute to educating people on the values of respect, diversity, tolerance and fairness and as a means to combat all forms of discrimination and promote social inclusion for all. It also reaffirms the need to combat discrimination and intolerance wherever they occur, within and outside the sporting context. It is therefore an important tool for fighting discrimination of any kind. In the same vein, Brazil was also one of the

sponsors of Human Rights Council resolution 27/32, on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, and an active member of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Core Group at the United Nations.

The importance of sport is also recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. During the opening of the 2012 Paralympic Games, the Brazilian Government signed a joint declaration with the Governments of the United Kingdom, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Korea on the role of the Games in the promotion of human rights and of values such as accessibility, social inclusion, non-discrimination, equality and respect. It is in that spirit that we will welcome the world to our country as hosts of the first World Indigenous Games in 2015 and the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2016.

Ms. Al-Hijji (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to participate in the discussion of this item and to have Qatar join the sponsors of draft resolution A/69/L.5 on this item, which the General Assembly will adopt at a later date. We believe it is an opportunity to recall the importance of sport as a tool for reinforcing the objectives of peace and development and the values we all share and is a way to reaffirm that sport can play a role in addressing social problems. We also welcome the important elements mentioned in the draft resolution, including partnerships between the private and public sectors, the role of the United Nations and the International Olympic Committee, the importance of fairness and integrity in sports competitions, equality, non-discrimination among States and individuals in sports, and the rights of special groups such as children, women and the disabled to practice sports.

We take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the efforts of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, and we also thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/69/330).

The State of Qatar recognizes the importance of sports in promoting physical and psychological health and fitness, social cohesion and solidarity; in inculcating noble values in the younger generation; and in promoting development and peace. It is also a way to achieve tolerance and diversity. Accordingly, the State of Qatar accords great importance to sports at the national, international and regional levels. We have successfully hosted major sports events such as the Asian Games in 2006 and the Doha GOALS Forum,

which since 2012 has served as a forum for international development initiatives through sports, sponsored by His Excellency Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar. Sports facilities in Qatar are sophisticated and state-of-the-art, and they enable the promotion of sports in Qatari society.

At the international level, our policy for international development includes a focus on initiatives on sports and youth. The Qatar Olympic Committee is an important institution that has carried out many important initiatives and contributions at the national and international levels. We supported the forty-first session of the United Nations Inter-Agency Games last April in New York. Qatar is a member of the Group of Friends of Sport for Development and Peace at the United Nations and co-chaired that Group in Geneva in 2013 with Costa Rica. The Qatar Olympic Committee 2020-2022 is playing an important role in preparing Qatar to host FIFA in 2022. It will be the first time that an Arab, Muslim and relatively small country will host such an important event.

Since 2012, on the second Tuesday in February, Qatar has celebrated National Sport Day, when public institutions and sports facilities organize various activities to spread awareness of and participation in sports. That important initiative aims to expand the base of participation in sports, health and physical activity, opening opportunities for participation by all members of society in sports and raising awareness of sports and the importance of physical education and activity. According to the decree by the Amir adopted recently, the Day is a paid national holiday to enable employees to participate and benefit. That initiative is an important example of the importance that the State of Qatar accords to sport and the manner in which it supports participation in sports and inculcates the values of sports in Qatari culture, all for promoting a healthy society that aims to achieve peace and development.

Mr. Nell (Germany): The report of the Secretary-General entitled "Sport for development and peace: realizing the potential" (A/69/330) underlines once again the important role sport can play in the different areas of development and peacebuilding, including specific initiatives undertaken by the Member States and entities of the United Nations system.

Sport activities bring together people from different regional, cultural and religious backgrounds and help to overcome cultural, linguistic and other barriers. Sport plays a valuable role in contributing to social

cohesiveness and rapprochement between cultures and peoples. Moreover, sport programmes can foster social inclusion and help in overcoming discrimination, inter alia on the grounds of race, religion, political opinion, disability, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity. Sport can also help to promote the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Moreover, sport programmes can support social integration, especially after periods of conflict.

Sport for development is playing an important role in German development cooperation. Recent examples are specific programmes that Germany supported in five countries. The focus of each programme varies from country to country depending on its needs, but it emphasizes mainly gender equality, youth development, HIV/AIDS prevention, peacebuilding and violence prevention.

We are grateful to the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, my compatriot Mr. Wilfried Lemke, for bringing together and coordinating the different actors in the fields of sports and development: multilateral actors such as United Nations entities, national Governments, non-governmental organizations and civil-society organizations. The Office on Sport for Development and Peace plays a key role in connecting people and promoting peace and mutual understanding. One very important initiative in this regard is the Youth Leadership camps developed by the Office. Germany is proud to have hosted such camps twice already.

I should like to conclude by thanking the co-Chairs of the Group of Friends for Sport for Development and Peace - in New York, Monaco and Tunisia, and in Geneva, Costa Rica and Qatar - for their engagement in this important field of our work at the United Nations.

Ms. Mohamed (Ethiopia): Let me begin by thanking the Secretary-General for the report he submitted to the Assembly on the agenda item under discussion (A/69/330), in which the wide-ranging activities conducted by the States Members of the United Nations, the Organization's various agencies and other stakeholders, pursuant to resolution 67/17, were described in detail, providing beneficial information on the progress that we have made so far.

We welcome the report, as it underscores the continued attention accorded to the importance of sport in promoting peace, security and development. I also

wish to join previous speakers in thanking Mr. Wilfried Lemke, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, for his continuing support to Member States in their efforts to promote the role of sport for development and peace, in general, particularly in helping to enhance global cultural understanding and friendly relations.

Ethiopia recognizes the fact that sport has traditionally played a significant role not only in enhancing the physical and mental well-being of individuals and members of communities, but has also benefited people by promoting and bringing about change for the better in the social, economic and political domains of humanity. Its extraordinary ability to galvanize people in spite of their diverse national and cultural backgrounds must be further enhanced and harnessed to the advantage of all of us, as well as to enable us to defend our ideas and share our ambitions to fight poverty and achieve peace.

Ethiopia also believes that the integration and mainstreaming of sport in national development programmes and policies deserve due consideration in order to improve the lives of people in terms of health and physical strength and economically. As in most countries, sport is very popular and is widely practiced by many people in Ethiopia. Indeed, at present our people have become the beneficiaries of various kinds of sport activities, much more than in the past.

But sport has not yet reached the desired level that we all expect it to achieve. Therefore, in recognition of the central role that sport could play in national socioeconomic development, the Government has developed a comprehensive national sport policy and has put in place appropriate mechanisms to implement it.

The basic tenets on which the policy bases itself include, among others, the firm conviction that sport is the fundamental right of all citizens to enjoy and practice regardless of gender or sociocultural background and without any restrictions whatsoever. Moreover, the Government wishes to ensure that the overall organization and management of sport is community-based and that the participation of society in different sports-related activities in their own localities, school and workplaces is in accordance with their interests and preferences. Therefore it has undertaken further measures that help to implement the national policy, with the support and cooperation of the relevant governmental organizations and institutions.

Ethiopia not only acknowledges and recognizes the potential role of sport in enhancing overall human well-being and social changes in all aspects of life, but it has also adapted various United Nations declarations and resolutions on sport and implemented them across the country in various forms of sports activity. In addition, Ethiopia has chosen sport as one of its overall development priorities and hence has actively been working to further enhance its useful contribution by integrating it into other national development and peace policies.

As a result, we have succeeded in bringing about positive changes in the areas of health, child and youth development, youth unemployment, the eradication of poverty, gender equality, the inclusion of persons with disabilities, environmental protection and peacebuilding.

Our ongoing five-year growth and transformation plan has been instrumental in promoting health, mental well-being and disease prevention through numerous sport activities. It should also be noted that all current measures that have been taken in one way or another are linked to efforts in implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and other United Nations development programmes.

We would like in this regard to call upon partners and other stakeholders to continue to help our national institutions in their capacity-building efforts in sport and physical education by providing financial, technical and logistical support for the development of sport programmes in Ethiopia.

Though we are convinced that much has been done, we feel confident that we are moving in the right direction to make sport into a potential tool for national development in all aspects, including in strengthening global understanding and friendship as well as in pursuing our peace agenda. On the other hand, mobilizing resources to employ sport for development objectives and to promote the peace agenda remains a critical challenge, to be overcome in a sustainable manner. Thus, in addressing resource constraints in addition to national efforts, cross-sectoral partnership and collaboration with regional and international stakeholders are of significant importance. Moreover, Ethiopia needs the support of the United Nations and other development partners, most notably in the areas of capacity-building, the provision of sports facilities and equipment, and the promotion of mass or community

sport participation, with a view to fully harnessing the power of sport to promote development and peace.

Let me in conclusion reiterate that Ethiopia will remain committed to implementing all sport-related resolutions of the United Nations and work with all stakeholders to promote sport as a tool for development and peace, nationally, regionally and across the rest of the world.

Mr. Lazarev (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Republic of Belarus has studied with a great deal of interest the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Sport for development and peace: realizing the potential” (A/69/330). We would like to extend to him our gratitude for its preparation. At the same time we consider it important that in similar such reports, the concrete actions of the United Nations with regard to developing sports in terms of peace and development and in banning negative manifestations – primarily politicization of the preparations for and holding of sports events – should be made clear. That could be fostered, first and foremost, by promoting practical interaction and cooperation among the leadership of the United Nations Secretariat and the International Olympic Committee.

As shown by the report’s examples, sport is a tool for intercultural dialogue and understanding. It can and should contribute towards achieving the sustainable development goals and to forging relations among individuals and among States. Major international sports events often achieve more in dispelling stereotypes and prejudice than any political process.

We congratulate the Russian Federation on the successful conduct of the XXII Olympic Winter Games and the XI Paralympic Winter Games in Sochi, which achieved the expected high level and tangibly confirmed the contribution of sports and the Olympic movement in building a more peaceful and happier planet. I also take the opportunity to congratulate our Russian colleagues on the Russian team’s impressive victory in the final of the 78th Ice Hockey World Championship, hosted by Belarus in Minsk, in May. The championship in Minsk again underscores a simple truth: the politicization of sports events is unacceptable and contravenes basic sports principles, and it serves no purpose.

We intend to continue to actively support the principles of neutrality and depoliticization of sports as a necessary precondition in fully achieving sports’ potential for peace and development. We are convinced

that the politicization of sports and the Olympic Games is incompatible with the principles of friendly, civilized intergovernmental relations, as well as the ideals and principles of sports and indeed the spirit and letter of the Olympic Charter.

We wish Brazil and the Republic of Korea every success in preparing and conducting important sports events and express the hope that those events will be fully in keeping with the highest standards and the spirit and letter of the Olympic Charter.

The Acting President: In accordance with resolution 64/3, of 19 October 2009, I now give the floor to the observer of the International Olympic Committee.

Mr. Pescante (International Olympic Committee): On behalf of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the supreme authority of the Olympic Movement, and in my capacity as Permanent Observer, I welcome the opportunity to address the General Assembly today to provide our perspective on the role of sport as a tool for development and peace.

Allow me to congratulate and thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/69/330) outlining the many ways that sport is contributing to a better world and the approaches that need to be strengthened.

With the Olympic Games, the IOC is able to set an example of global peaceful interaction. The Olympic Games, the Olympic athletes and in particular the Olympic Village are powerful symbols of that. They break down any kind of barrier: political, geographical, ethnic, religious and cultural. They serve as an example of mutual respect and non-discrimination. They bring Olympic values to life and demonstrate their unifying power to a global audience. The Olympic Movement cannot be truly successful unless we leverage that positive power year-round and with the support of partners. The past two years have seen many important developments in that area, especially in the strong partnership between the IOC and the United Nations and in several joint initiatives with its agencies and programmes.

The IOC's collaboration with the United Nations demonstrates the positive impact of effective engagement among sport, politics, culture and other aspects of society. Sport can change the world, Nelson Mandela said, but it cannot change the world alone. That is why the IOC, under President Thomas Bach, is

engaging more than ever before with political leaders at the highest level. Since taking office a little more than a year ago, President Bach has met with 85 Heads of State and Government, and he confers regularly with the Secretary-General. As President Bach has said,

“It is time that sport is no longer isolated from politics. We will always be neutral, but we will talk with Governments and work with organizations like the United Nations.”

Those relationships must be built on a foundation of mutual respect that protects the autonomy of sport. Sport is unique. It is guided by truly universal principles that are based on globally recognized ethics: fair play, respect and friendship. Government and political interference dismantle that global framework and render sport ineffective as a tool for positive change.

In keeping with the emphasis on expanded engagement, and in another sign of the strong relationship between the IOC and the United Nations, President Bach and the Secretary-General signed an historic agreement in April to strengthen cooperation between the two organizations. Among other things, the agreement calls for using sport to promote a number of social dimensions, including women's empowerment, inclusion, healthy lifestyles promotion and peacebuilding. Those goals are embedded in the Olympic Agenda 2020, our strategic road map that will shape the future of the Olympic Movement. The IOC is exploring ways to use sport even more effectively as a tool for positive change.

In this time of increased sedentary behaviour, persistent inequalities for girls and women, rampant social exclusion and devastating conflict, the world needs sport more than ever. We strongly encourage Governments and other stakeholders to increase access to safe and protected sport for all, particularly for girls and women, people with disabilities and marginalized communities. We strongly encourage others to join the IOC in promoting sport and physical activity for health and well-being.

Sport and physical activity can help ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning. They encourage school attendance and can help teach social skills. We strongly encourage the inclusion of quality and age-appropriate physical education in school curricula, along with values education. Sport can help make cities and human settlements safe and sustainable. Sport helps steer young people away from

delinquency and dangerous behaviour. Sport promotes social cohesion and helps lower health-care costs. We strongly encourage investment in sport facilities, infrastructure and safe play spaces, which can help build active and healthy cities. Sport and physical activity need to be seriously considered in the post-2015 development agenda. They provide a meaningful way to advancing any future sustainable development goals, especially on issues related to health, education and community life.

Sport can also contribute to advancing environmental protection. The IOC is committed to working with the United Nations and other stakeholders to ensure that sport plays a significant role in achieving a sustainable approach to development. Environmental considerations have been included in planning and organizing the Olympic Games for 20 years, and we have called on other sport organizations to follow that example. This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the partnership between the IOC and United Nations in that area. The partnership has most recently provided support and guidance during preparations for the Olympic Winter Games in Sochi and for the upcoming Games in Rio in 2016.

Let me not forget to mention the importance of sport to peacebuilding. I want to thank the General Assembly for the work on and adoption of resolution 68/9 – the Olympic Truce resolution – in November 2013, in view of the Sochi Games. The steadfast and consistent support by the United Nations of the Olympic Truce is an excellent example of how the sport movement and Governments can work together to advance common goals. The Truce will not bring about world peace, but it sends a strong symbolic message to the entire world. A new consultation process for an Olympic Truce resolution urging an end to conflict in the context of the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro is to start in the coming months, and we hope that the General Assembly and all Member States will once again unanimously support it.

In all of these initiatives, the IOC is grateful for the support and assistance provided by the United Nations Group of Friends of Sport for Development and Peace and its co-Chairs, Ambassadors Picco and Khiari. We thank in particular Mr. Wilfried Lemke, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, and the entire team at the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace. We are naturally extremely grateful to the Secretary-General,

a true friend of sport and the Olympic Movement. His participation at the IOC session in Sochi and his run in the Olympic Torch relay is a great sign of the depth of his personal commitment.

Together, the IOC and the United Nations are using sport to improve lives and build better communities around the world. As outlined in the report of the Secretary-General, we have seen much progress over the past two years. The Secretary-General has also reminded us that there is still much more to do. Let me reiterate the strong commitment and determination of the International Olympic Committee to ensuring our collaboration to build together a better and more peaceful future for the young generations.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 11.

The observer of the Observer State of Palestine has requested the floor in exercise of the right of reply. I remind him that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to 5 minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Al-Hantouli (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): I speak in right of reply on behalf of the delegation of the Observer State of Palestine, in response to the statement made by the representative of Israel, the occupying Power.

We would have liked to have been able to come to the General Assembly to consider this important agenda item and to take stock of the progress and achievements we have made within the framework of sport, especially its role in development and peace. However, we regret the fact that we are experiencing a difficult phase, with the Israeli occupation dominating all aspects of life, including sport.

The occupying Power hampers the development and maintenance of sport infrastructure, for example. It hampers the movement of athletes, technicians and, of course, spectators. If we want to organize any Palestinian sport activities in the territory of Palestine, that involves a decision that is hostage to the vagaries of Israel's mood at the time. In most cases, Israel attempts to ensure that the majority of Palestinian sport events or activities do not happen. Israel's violations of human rights in general, and the rights of athletes in particular, are ongoing.

Recently, during the war against Gaza, such violations took place, and we lost a number of our athletes, for example, the athlete and recognized trainer Aahid Zaqout. Mohamed Bakr, age 9, Atef Bakr, age 10, Zakaria Bakr, age 10, and Mohamed Ramez, age 11, could have participated alongside Ahmed in sports activities, including with Israeli children. However, the occupying Power decided otherwise and killed them while they were engaged in sport activities on the beaches of Gaza. Those children are proof that the culture of life is something that is deeply rooted in our spirit and in our adults and children. Unfortunately, the occupying Power continues to destroy all initiatives or means aimed at achieving development and peace in Palestine. Sport is no exception here. Sport, too, is destroyed.

Munich was a one-time occurrence. It will not be repeated. Israel's practices – its massacres of the Palestinian people, including athletes – have gone on now for 66 years. In that time, Israel has broken all records when it comes to human rights violations. They have won every gold medal and trophy in that category. Israel, the occupying Power, will not put an end to its practices until the international community takes up its responsibilities with regard to that country, which practices terrorism, for we have not asked it to be responsible for its actions.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 11.

The meeting rose at 12 noon.