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**Dr. Praveen Singh Jadon**

Assistant Professor, K.A. (P.G)  
College, Kasganj, Uttar Pradesh,  
India

## Sports for development and peace

**Dr. Praveen Singh Jadon**

### Abstract

The use of sport as a pedagogic tool has motivated the international sports movement into tangible action. In parallel, our success in the field has made political leaders and governments aware of how sport can be a genuine and effective mechanism for peace. Furthermore, we are increasingly working with international companies, to encourage them to integrate sport into their social responsibility and local policies. Sport plays a significant role as a promoter of social integration and economic development in different geographical, cultural and political contexts. Sport is a powerful tool to strengthen social ties and networks, and to promote ideals of peace, fraternity, solidarity, non-violence, tolerance and justice.

**Keywords:** Sports, Peace

### Introduction

As of 2010, the Human Rights Council has been addressing several topics at the crossroads of sports and human rights.

On 8 March 2010, the UN Special Reporters on adequate housing, Mrs. Raquel Rolnik, released her annual report (A/HRC/13/20) which focused on the impact of “mega-events” in the realization of the right to adequate housing. The study provides an analysis of the positive and negative legacy of hosting the Olympic Games and the FIFA Football World Cup, some insights on the practices and procedures of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and FIFA, and recommendations addressed to governments, the IOC and FIFA.

On 26 March 2010, in the context of the then approaching 2010 Football World Cup in South Africa, the Human Rights Council adopted a Resolution entitled “A world of sports free from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance” (A/HRC/RES/13/27). In the resolution, the Council inter alia “underlines the importance of combating impunity for racially motivated crimes in sport, and urges States to take all appropriate measures, in accordance with domestic legislation and international obligations, to prevent, combat and address all manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in the context of sporting events, and to ensure that racially motivated crimes are punished by law, as appropriate.”

On 21 March 2011, at its session on the “Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories”, the Council adopted a Resolution demanding that Israel takes “the necessary measures to ensure the respect of internationally recognized sport principles”, in particular concerning the free movement and circulation of athletes, administrative staff, equipment and sports materials into and within the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

On 28 September 2011, the Council adopted a Resolution entitled “Promoting awareness, understanding and the application of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights through sport and the Olympic ideal” calling for the holding of a “high-level interactive panel discussion to highlight, examine and suggest ways in which sport and major sporting events, in particular the Olympic and Paralympic Games, can be used to promote awareness and understanding of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the application of the principles enshrined therein.” The discussion is due to take place at the next session of the Council.

### Correspondence

**Dr. Praveen Singh Jadon**

Assistant Professor, K.A. (P.G)  
College, Kasganj, Uttar Pradesh,  
India

Date	Title	Reference
20 September 2013	Promoting human rights through sport and the Olympic ideal	A/HRC/24/L.1
30 May 2012	Summary of the high-level interactive panel discussion of the Human Rights Council to highlight, examine and suggest ways in which sport and major sporting events, in particular the Olympic and Paralympic Games, can be used to promote awareness and understanding of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the application of the principles enshrined therein.	A/HRC/20/11
28 September 2011	Promoting awareness, understanding and the application of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights through sport and the Olympic ideal	A/HRC/RES/18/23
25 March 2011	Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem	A/HRC/16/29
26 March 2010	A world of sports free from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance	A/HRC/RES/13/27
18 December 2009	Report of the Special Reporters on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, Raquel Rolnik	A/HRC/13/20

### Why Sports

We know that Sport has historically played an important role in all countries and societies, either in the form of physical activity, competitive sport, or play.

In fact, sport presents a natural partnership for the United Nations (UN) system: sport and play are human rights and must be respected and enforced worldwide; sport has been increasingly recognized and used as a low-cost and high-impact tool in humanitarian, development and peace-building efforts at every place even by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments, development agencies, sports federations, armed forces and the media.

Sport is an important investment in developing countries.

### Definition of "Sport"

The definition of sport commonly includes a comprehensive, including and inclusive variety of activities fitting to people of all ages, sex and abilities, with an significant on the positive values of sport.

In 2003, the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace defined sport, for the purposes of development, as "all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction, such as play, recreation, organized or competitive sport, and indigenous sports and games." This definition has since then been approved by many proponents of Sport for Development and Peace.

### Sport as a fundamental right

The right of access to and involvement in sport and play has long been acknowledged in a number of international conventions. In 1978, UNESCO described sport and physical education as a "fundamental right for all". But the right to play and sport has too often been neglected, ignored or disrespected till today.

### Sport as a Powerful Tool

Sport has an extraordinary power to appeal, attach, engage, fascinate, attract, lure, mobilize, cheer, encourage, and inspire. It is about inclusion and citizenship. It stands for human values such as respect for the opponent, acceptance of binding rules, teamwork and fairness, all of which are principles which are also contained in the Charter of the United Nations.

The UN system draws on the unique convening power of sport as a cross-cutting tool for:

- Fundraising, advocacy, mobilization and raising public awareness: in particular by appointing celebrity athletes

as 'Ambassadors' or 'Spokespersons' and leveraging the potential of sports events as outreach platforms. The mobilizing power of sport is often used as a "door-opener" to convey crucial messages about HIV/AIDS, child's rights, the environment, education, etc.

- Development and peace promotion: in grassroots projects sport is used in an extremely wide range of situations – whether as an integrated tool in short-term emergency humanitarian aid activities, or in long-term development cooperation projects, on a local, regional or global scale.

Sport plays a significant role as a promoter of social integration and economic development in different geographical, cultural and political contexts. Sport is a powerful tool to strengthen social ties and networks, and to promote ideals of peace, fraternity, solidarity, non-violence, tolerance and justice. According to the Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group, sport is seen to have the most benefits in:

- Individual development
- Health promotion and disease prevention
- Promotion of gender equality
- Social integration and the development of social capital
- Peace building and conflict prevention/resolution
- Post-disaster/trauma relief and normalisation of life
- Economic development
- Communication and social mobilisation.

From a development perspective, the focus is always on mass sport and not elite sport. Sport is used to reach out to those most in need including refugees, child soldiers, victims of conflict and natural catastrophes, the impoverished, persons with disabilities, victims of racism, stigmatization and discrimination, persons living with HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

### Path to Success

Sport is not a cure-all for development problems. As a cultural phenomenon, it is a mirror of society and is just as complex and contradictory.

As such, sport can also have negative side effects such as violence, corruption, discrimination, hooliganism, nationalism, doping and fraud. To enable sport to unleash its full positive potential, emphasis must be placed on effective monitoring and guiding of sports activities.

The positive potential of sport does not develop automatically. It requires a professional and socially

responsible intervention which is tailored to the respective social and cultural context. Successful Sport for Development and Peace programmes work to realize the right of all members of society to participate in sport and leisure activities. Effective programmes intentionally give priority to development objectives and are carefully designed to be inclusive.

Effective Sport for Development and Peace programmes combine sport and play with other non-sport components to enhance their effectiveness. Such programmes embody the best values of sport while upholding the quality and integrity of the sport experience. They are delivered in an integrated manner with other local, regional and national development and peace initiatives so that they are mutually reinforcing. Programmes seek to empower participants and communities by engaging them in the design and delivery of activities, building local capacity, adhering to generally accepted principles of transparency and accountability, and pursuing sustainability through collaboration, partnerships and coordinated action.

### **Sports and Peace**

Sport as a universal language can be a powerful tool to promote peace, tolerance and understanding by bringing people together across boundaries, cultures and religions. Its intrinsic values such as teamwork, fairness, discipline, respect for the opponent and the rules of the game are understood all over the world and can be harnessed in the advancement of solidarity, social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

Sport programmes permit encounters on neutral territory and in an environment where aggression can be controlled, regulated and transformed and hence facilitates rapprochement and reconciliation between opposing parties.

Many UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies have used and continue to use sport programmes to achieve their objectives. In post-conflict situations, sport programmes are systematically used by UN peacekeeping operations and UN country teams as a “door opener” to rebuild trust by bringing together former opponents, and to re-integrate child soldiers and ex-combatants into the civil communities.

Although sport alone cannot stop or solve an acute conflict, it represents a flexible and cost-effective medium for post-conflict relief work and peace building as well as conflict prevention.

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