



PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE
GENEVA

Ref. No. 6174.1./8/686

NOTE VERBALE

The Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the Human Rights Advisory Committee and with reference to the questionnaire on promoting human rights through sport and the Olympic ideal, has the honour to submit the attached responses.

The Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Secretariat of the Human Rights Advisory Committee the assurances of its highest consideration.



Geneva, 8 April 2014

**To: The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Secretariat of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee
Palais Wilson**

Fax: +41 22 917 90 11

Att.: 6 pages

OIICHR REGISTRY

- 9 AVR. 2014

Recipients :....H.A.C...A.C

.....
.....
.....

1. How is sport used in your country to promote human rights? What are the best practices being applied?

Athletic Authorities strongly believe in the power of paradigm, namely setting, implementing and endorsing the "correct" examples. Therefore, we find absolutely necessary nowadays to use all means provided by modern technology (written and visual press, internet and social media etc.) in order to forge especially on the conscience of young people those ideals which lead them to work for and create a truly free democratic society, thus a better and more humane world.

2. What are the possibilities of using sport and the Olympic ideal to strengthen respect for human rights?

There are many ways to use sports to strengthen the respect for human rights, in the complex modern world, we should identify two types of societies so that we can adapt our rationale accordingly.

Post conflict societies

In post conflict societies, we have to put emphasis on healing the wounds of war by offering an alternative way of dealing with opposing interests. We need to use sport as an example of a situation in which different personalities compete, but also respect the same rules - and most of all, they respect their opponents. We need to teach them that collaborative effort can add up to much better results - and they will need this skill to reconstruct their community. We learn with them how much power sports can have if they become a central activity for a community. We remind them of the ancient Greek saying "healthy mind in a *healthy* body", linking sport with dear thinking. We use athletes as role models for their children.

In order to keep young people from following this path in life, through the use of sport and the values of the Olympic Movement, we have to:

- Offer an alternative life model; a model wherein young people's natural rebelliousness and energy are channeled elsewhere, into sport and other peaceful activities, to the benefit of the community. Our aim should be to identify each young person's special characteristics and inclinations so that these may be expressed creatively through sport. To help children change their standards - the models according to which they live - we have to impact their existing standards. We have to find the leaders of the community and convince them that they can use their influence for something good. We need to give them incentive to change. They have to be made to understand that, because they are community leaders, they can influence the younger generation through their stance.
- Teach young children to function according to rules and to recognize that they need to respect those rules if they want to participate in the game.

We need to create a new culture, and this is a process that takes time and demands persistence, patience and respect for the particularities of each society. It is a gradual process, but one that must succeed. It is based on strengthening the notion of teamwork, on

young people learning to work together to achieve a goal, and on the satisfaction each young person feels when victory is achieved.

The satisfaction derived from victory gradually builds self-confidence. Individuals who see that they can achieve their goals, that they are good at something, are filled with courage and continue on that path; the path, in this case, of the peaceful competition provided by sports. Thus, they gradually withdraw from the war-related activities in which they were previously involved. Aspirations of victory in sport absorb more and more of their time and more and more of their thoughts. They concern themselves with preparing for the next match and thus have less time for war.

In this way, we broaden participation in the game. We are starting to achieve our initial goal: for sport to become the focal point of the community's social life. Not as an end in itself, but as a means for pulling the younger generation away from war-related activities; providing these young people with a new outlet and interest. In tandem, sport is being organized on firm foundations in the community, becoming a workshop where the foundations are laid for young people learning to live peacefully and according to rules.

On the one hand, we have the advantages offered by sport: outlet for the energy of youth, life training through rules, respect for one's opponent, tolerance of difference. On the other hand, we have the loss of human life, which, on the community level, may mean a brother, a friend, oneself - we have the nonexistence of the notion of defeat, because defeat is associated with death.

Pointing up these differences in practice in a community preparing to emerge from a state of conflict, we present the young with the dilemma and show them the answer. Through sport, the young can discover and develop their talents. And the best of them will distinguish themselves locally, regionally, nationally or even on the international level. They will gain recognition and make money, and they will serve as new role models for their communities. This will create a process that is self-perpetuating - with sport being the vehicle for the process - resulting in the creation of new models. As the right incentives are established - such as construction of better sport infrastructure for the communities emerging from conflict, leading to the emergence of new models - the whole of society will support and safeguard this goal.

Non post-conflict societies

Working with non-post-conflict societies is different because there are other characteristics and challenges to respond to, but one of the main challenges is still to accept and respect the human rights of others and to defend them when needed. Cultural differences are present and are acute. Immigration flows towards Europe and other developed areas are constant, raise concerns among the more conservative groups of our societies, and may eventually lead to racism. Sex discrimination and marginalisation of social groups for cultural reasons also lead to conflict within the society. The first step is to learn to tolerate other people's special characteristics. Someone can be tall or short, white or black, Asian or South American, gifted or disabled, Muslim or Hindu, conservative or progressive, and so on. Tolerance for diversity is the basis of Enlightenment, the very basis of our society. We need to ensure that everyone has the right to exist and express his/her ideas freely.

The next step we need to take is to enhance cross-cultural exchanges and show the young generation that being different does not mean being unequal. By knowing each other's

culture, youngsters are able to de-demonise stereotypes, to shake off prejudice and understand the essence of a culture or an idea. At the same time, they have the opportunity to showcase their own culture, special characteristics and ideas and create the basis for an honest dialogue.

Having understood the contribution of tolerance and cross-cultural cooperation to building societies that are more *open*, the young generation eliminates the causes of conflict. No one fights an idea that is familiar to him or her. He/she may oppose it or try to convince someone else that her own idea is more appropriate but she will do that in a peaceful way. Therefore, we can help the young generation to be builders of peaceful coexistence. When we say that we want global peace, we do not support that a universal truth will prevail. We support that people will argue for their beliefs, being ready to accept that their ideas may be enriched by someone else's input. Constructive disagreement can prevail through comparison with the consequences of conflict, as described in the previous chapter.

Societies not at war have other challenges, equally important and crucial. Changing a society's value system may prove as difficult as reconstructing a post-conflict society. Therefore, we focus our efforts on educating people, and especially the younger generation.

3. What are the sports practiced in your country and how far they are all inclusive (for women, youth, vulnerable groups etc)

- Most of the world-known sports are practiced in Greece.
- The organization of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2004 helped to make all Olympic sports well - known in the country.
- On top of that, Greece has a very active team in Special Olympics movement.
- There are no legal restrictions for anyone who wants to practice any sport.
- Sports schools are open for everyone
- Most sports facilities are accessible for everyone

4. In what way can sport and the Olympic ideal become a means to:

a) Advance the cause of peace?

We want, through the Inspirational power of sports, to use sports as a tool to instill the Olympic values in the young generation, to help them gradually build a Culture of Peace. It is there that the Olympic values meet the respect for human rights.

An athlete, as well a citizen, a community member or a fan, cannot be considered an integrated personality if they have not developed, through education, a detailed view of the value and usefulness of adopting the sports ideals as a way of life, as a perception and approach towards everyday life, towards the problems and the challenges of modern societies.

Just before the Youth Olympic Games in Nanjing, IOTC is organizing the IMAGINE

PEACE Youth Camp, in Ancient Olympia, which is endorsed and supported by the Hellenic Republic, through the Ministry of Education. Participants from all over the world, coming both from underserved, developing countries at war or post-conflict societies, as well as from developed countries or countries that enjoy long-term peace, are being brought together in a week-long camp, to learn the principles and ideals of Olympism, of Olympic

Truce and, thus, of Peace. In fact, a whole day will be dedicated to Human Rights. The Youth Camp will explore the importance of Olympic values (Excellence, Friendship, Respect), how sports are connected and interrelated with peace and development, the importance of Olympic Truce and how its values might affect our daily lives and conduct. The delivery of the Respecting Diversity program will help us explore equality, social inclusion and conflict resolution. The strengthening of dialogue and cooperation through a mentality linked to Olympism and Sports will be also analyzed. **The wider and long-term objective is to create and gradually promote the adoption of a Culture of Peace that respects human rights.**

The Ministry of Education is also supporting the development of innovative educational programs that help us reach the young generation, discuss the basic principles of Olympism with them, and educate them in how to endorse the Olympic ideals and respect for human rights in their everyday lives.

The IMAGINE PEACE Educational program that took place in the school years 2011-12 and 2012-13 reached more than 5,000 students in 50 schools around Greece. The instructor uses experiential techniques to assist students in participating and learning in practice the history and ideals of Olympism and Olympic Truce. In addition to that, Olympians share with students their experience of participating in the Olympic Games and talk to them about their sports. Our aim is to teach children the basic Olympic values, which describe, in other words, human rights.

The **RESPECTING DIVERSITY Educational program** started this school year and has already reached more than 3,000 students in 90 schools around Greece, while 3 seminars for educators have been organized so far. This workshop is based on the poems found in the RESPECTING DIVERSITY book and addresses the issue of bullying, in all its expressions. We have chosen to point up the issue of bullying because it is one of the most widespread forms of human rights violation among students. We want to educate students in how to respect diversity and how to address such issues when they face them. Experiential techniques are used here as well, but the active participation of teachers is also required. Olympians are an essential part of the program, as they showcase their sport and, of course, they speak about their Olympic experience. We also organized a national competition on bullying, which attracted the interest of the school community in Greece. More than 1,600 students and 200 teachers participated, sending their own video presentation on bullying.

Teaching respect for human rights is one thing. We strive to respect them in practice. For this reason, we deliver educational programs to schools for deaf and blind children and to schools for children with special abilities.

The next step of this project is the organization of the competition on a European level, so as to reach as many youngsters as possible. The European competition will be developed in cooperation with the European Commission and the Hellenic Ministry of Education.

Moreover, we have endorsed a joint project of UNICEF Hellas and the International Olympic Truce Centre that promotes the values of peace, tolerance and solidarity, thus sending a strong message against violence and racism. The educational program "*You and I, together, for a world of peace, without violence and racism,*" which is under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, aims at students in primary and secondary education, aged 6 to 18, and intends to inform and sensitize them on the aforementioned values. The students, under the guidance of their teachers and family, organize a series of activities in and around the school, such as sporting events, theatrical productions, exhibitions, lectures, etc.

b) Promote development?

Respect of human rights means that all barriers that prevent people from participating actively in the social and financial life of a society are lifted. Therefore, more human resources, more ideas, more hands are able to offer to the society and contribute to the development.

Sports and the Olympic ideal promote excellence. Educating people with the ideal of peaceful competition teaches them to strive for the best result in the framework of common rules.

Sports are one of the largest industries worldwide. It expands rapidly in developing countries. It creates job opportunities not only in the industry itself but also in the fields of marketing, medical and paramedical, media, fashion, etc.

c) Combat all forms of discrimination?

We are far from attaining a satisfactory result, much less achieving our goal which is the respect of human rights by all. In fact, the co-existence of different cultures, growing racist trends, the crisis of principles and values coinciding with the peaking of the economic crisis, and peer emulation and influence are only some of the causes.

The most effective way to combat all forms of discrimination is to enhance the social inclusion of vulnerable groups. Promoting participation for these groups will show to the rest of the society that they are as equal as them, but they are different. The development of games where the role of people with diversities (women, people with different color or religion or with mobility or hearing problems) will be crucial for the evolution of the game (e.g. they will be the only ones who can score a point or a goal), will break the prejudices towards them and restore their place in the society.

The best way to promote the respect of human rights is education, especially for the young generation. As a society, we need to raise our children with the Olympic principles of friendship, respect and excellence. We ought to make them understand that respecting other people's rights saves time and energy from arguing and creates the necessary ground to develop more efficient synergies.

We should develop synergies with organizations that share the sports and Olympic values. Promoting a healthy way of life does not refer just to our bodies. It also refers to our

minds and souls. A healthy person is a person in equilibrium, who develops his body and his personality equally. We need to inspire people to respect human rights. Sports have an inspirational power for all humanity, so we have to exploit this power to instill in people's minds, especially young people's minds, the ideals that will help them create and live in a better world.

5. What kinds of challenges are faced in promoting human rights through sport and the Olympic ideal?

We are far from attaining a satisfactory result, much less achieving our goal which is the respect of human right by all. In fact, the co-existence of different cultures, growing racist trends, the crisis of principles and values coinciding with the peaking of the economic crisis, and peer emulation and influence are only some of the causes.

All challenges faced in promoting the respect of human rights depict clearly a crisis in the values system. Those who do not respect human rights do so because they are educated with the right principles. Therefore, the greatest challenge is how we can create a culture where people can endorse the Olympic ideals and make them their way of life. This culture, that we call a Culture of Peace is not a textbook with rules to follow; it is a system of values that changes the way we conduct our everyday lives. And this is the greatest challenge, which can be overcome only through education.

6. How can media help in the promotion of human rights through sport and the Olympic ideal?

- Can promote the ideals and principles of the Olympic Movement and all related activities
- Can promote athletes, especially Olympians, as role models for the young generation
- Can raise awareness on best practices for the promotion of human rights through sports
- Can motivate more people to practice sports and experience the respect of human rights in practice