



**United  
Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs

## High-Level Political Forum VNR Lab 2021

Wednesday 7 July, 1 – 2:30 PM (NYC time)

### Inclusive sustainable development: youth, sport and the 2030 Agenda

#### Introduction

Today, there are 1.21 billion people between the ages of 15-24, accounting for 15.5 per cent of the global population. They are the largest generation of youth in history. Youth are agents of change, mobilizing to advance the Sustainable Development Goals to improve the lives of people and the health of the planet. They also contribute to the resilience of their communities, proposing innovative solutions, driving social progress and inspiring political change. Youth, for instance, are 1.6 times more likely than adults to be engaged in entrepreneurial activity. As such they can be a driving force for supporting development and contributing to peace and security. Provided with the necessary skills and opportunities needed to reach their potential, youth have the power to make the most effective transformation of the world into a better place for all. In this, sport has proven to be a cost-effective and flexible tool for promoting peace and development objectives.

Sport is an enabler of development and peace, as stated in the preamble of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sport for all people of all ages and abilities can play an important role through its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of youth, including those left behind - individuals and communities. Sport is also a tool to reach important objectives for the wellbeing of youth like health, education and social inclusion. By taking part in sport and physical activities youth are exposed to sport's key values, including teamwork, fair play, respect of the rules and others, cooperation, discipline and tolerance. These skills are essential for future participation in group activities and professional life, and can stimulate social cohesion within communities and societies, ensuring no one is left behind.

#### Youth, Sport and the 2030 Agenda

A core principle of the 2030 Agenda is to tackle structural inequalities, address discrimination and promote more equitable societies. The active engagement of youth is central to the achievement of inclusive development. Far from being only beneficiaries of the 2030 Agenda, youth have been



active participants in its development and continue to be engaged in the frameworks and processes that support its implementation. Young people and youth entities from all over the world, for instance, were key stakeholders in the negotiation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Goals and 169 targets, ensuring that the rights, priorities and needs of young people were integrated and considered. Among the key tools used by and for young people in the achievement of SDGs, sport constitutes an important mechanism to promote social inclusion. Sport has been used, for instance, as a tool of integration and empowerment of young refugees.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlights the growing contribution of sport to the realization of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect. As countries around the world grapple with the many harmful impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the sport community can redouble its efforts to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. As a part of the United Nations vision to build back better through sport, it is imperative to accelerate the implementation of the 17 sustainable development goals by 2030 and beyond. What role can youth play to promote inclusion of all regardless of their gender, disability, ethnicity, socio-economic situation and education? How can sport, as described in the preamble of the 2030 Agenda, enable youth to be included in the development and peace-building processes, and enhance their well-being?

Youth in least developed and developing nations, youth in humanitarian contexts, including those forced to flee, and those from more stable and wealthier nations can play an important role to promote mutual understanding and tolerance and help overcome discrimination in all its forms. Through sport programmes youth with disabilities, indigenous youth, young refugees and other displaced, vulnerable and marginalized groups, can engage in initiatives that promote psychological, cognitive and physical development. These initiatives may help reduce violence, conflict and other social challenges and contribute to the development of positive life skills such as cooperation, problem-solving, conflict prevention and reconciliation.

Olympic and Paralympic movements play an important role in showcasing the achievements of young athletes to a global audience. In particular, the Paralympics are vital in promoting positive perceptions and greater inclusion of people with disabilities in sport and society. Furthermore, the legacies of the Games, for people, sport, cities and infrastructure, have the potential to engage and inspire new generations.

Sport can provide youth uprooted by conflict or persecution with the opportunity to be included and protected. Through organized, safe and developmental sports activities refugees and other



displaced children and youth can share and build common experiences, in the process breaking down barriers, stereotypes and negative social norms.

Sport activities represent critical convening spaces in which youth can build meaningful relationships and partnerships in fun, safe and supportive environments. These spaces can contribute to fostering solidarity, togetherness and empathy among and between diverse youth groups and their communities. More broadly sport activities offer youth the opportunity to acquire the core values of multilateralism and democratic citizenship that can promote sustainable and inclusive development.

## Rationale and Aim of the Lab

UN DESA's Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD), which has the substantive mandate on sport for development and peace, is organizing a Voluntary National Review (VNR) Lab at the 2021 HLPF entitled "Inclusive Social Development: Youth, Sport and the 2030 Agenda". The aim of this event is to:

1. Highlight, promote and reflect on the role of sport as an enabler and driver of sustainable development;
2. Provide a platform for Member States, and other national and regional stakeholders, including youth and youth organizations, to share their experiences - both successes and challenges – about supporting youth empowerment through sport programmes;
3. Present examples of how youth involvement in sport can contribute to promoting inclusive sustainable development and peace, highlighting strategies and partnerships to effectively build youth's positive life skills and inclusive social values;
4. Highlight examples of barriers faced by Member States in successfully reaching youth in their communities and provide recommendations to overcome these challenges.

## Draft Programme

Welcoming remarks: Daniela Bas  
(2 mins) Director, Division for Inclusive Social Development (UNDESA/DISD)

Moderator: Melissa Martin, UNDESA/DISD

Opening remarks: Francesca Spatolisano  
UNDESA Assistant Secretary General



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*(4 mins each)*

Raouf Mazou  
UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Operations (Co- Chair, Inter-  
Agency Group on Sport for Development and Peace)

H.E. Isabelle Picco  
Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Monaco to the United Nations (Co-  
Chair Group of Friends of Sport for Sustainable Development- NY)

Keynote address:  
*(7 mins)*

[Pur Biel \(TBC\)](#)  
Refugee Olympian/Paralympian

Panel discussion:  
*(4 mins each)*

H.E. Tetsuya Kimura  
Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations

Hon. Kirsty L. Coventry,  
Minister for Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation, Zimbabwe

Annika Bryson-Emmert  
Youth athlete

Interactive dialogue  
*(45 mins)*

Closing remarks:  
*(3 mins)*

Daniela Bas  
Director, DESA/DISD