

United Nations Association

Westminster Branch

Campaigning for a strong, credible and effective UN



A Sport for Peace World Database will help 'build a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal'

Executive Summary

The Sport for Peace World Database comprising success stories from all countries, showing how sport can be an effective tool to promote peace, dialogue and reconciliation in areas of conflict will be for all to use. It will be set up in London through the fortunate and unique coincidence of the goodwill and enthusiasm of its knowledgeable diplomatic community, the first-hand experience of London

2012 Olympics-linked organisations and the co-ordinating strengths of the United Nations Association Westminster branch. It will become a valuable tool for all peoples of the world to use and a tangible and sustaining legacy of the 2012 Olympic Games in the manner intended in the UN Resolution which was co-sponsored by all UN Member States on 14 October 2011.

Background

It was thanks to the Olympic Truce of the ancient era that athletes could travel unhindered through the lands of traditional enemies to and from the Olympic Games. In the modern Olympiad era, the Truce played no part until 1993 when the UN General Assembly welcomed the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) appeal for an Olympic Truce to mobilise youth in the cause of peace. Seven years later, the IOC set up the International Olympic Truce Foundation (IOTF) and its operational arm, the International Olympic Truce Centre (IOTC) based in Athens to 'promote further the ideals of peace and understanding through sport'. In the Olympic Village at the 2004 Athens Games, the flags of the United Nations and the Olympic Truce flew together for the first time. At last, the Olympic Truce had a universally recognised symbol. This practice has continued for each Olympic Games.



Introducing the Olympic Truce Resolution presented to the UN General Assembly on 14 October 2011, the UK delegate stated it was 'grounded in the vision for the London 2012 Games to be a catalyst for long term positive change and to inspire young people'. He continued *'The Olympic Truce and the Olympic Values can play a role, in*

combination with the Olympic Movement and sport in general, as tools for promoting peace.'

To follow up this aspiration, the London Games organisers set out to promote the Olympic Truce with the *London 2012 Inspire* programme. This enabled British civil society organisations to associate their events and projects with the Olympic Games through the promotion of the principles of the Olympic Truce being a core element of its culture and education programmes. A number of such projects were recognised as part of the Truce strand of the *Inspire* programme and featured energetic social integration and reconciliation initiatives from all parts of the country. These will contribute to the Olympic Truce legacy, to be passed on to future host cities. Similarly, a number of schools reported on their activities to promote the Olympic Truce and a number of British embassies encouraged Olympic Truce-related initiatives.

How are these recorded? Surely, round the world, there have been countless examples of sport as an 'effective tool to promote peace, dialogue and reconciliation in areas of conflict'. Like so many peace-related activities, these are poorly recorded, let alone catalogued. Without a common platform or even a protocol, we have made it difficult for ourselves to learn from one another. The UN

General Assembly debate on 14 October 2011 featured bold statements by delegates extolling the virtues of various projects and aspirational initiatives but these could never be usefully summarised. To their great credit, an informal group of Permanent Representatives to the UN in New York have formed a Group of Friends of Sport for Development and Peace. This serves as a platform to promote dialogue and encourage UN Member States and the UN system to integrate sport actively into their policies and strategies. Its members 'share national experiences and practices, exchange information and propose initiatives for its members and the United Nations system, for example joint ventures with internal and external partners and stakeholders.' But that is as far as this initiative goes. Laudable initiatives have been taken at the inter-governmental level. In 2008, the Canada-led Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group published its well-received report *Harnessing the Powers for Sport for Development and Peace*:

recommendations to governments. This noted that, of the 34 countries invited by the Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group to share information about their relevant initiatives, about 70% of developing countries and 85% of developed countries either use, or plan to use, sport in national strategies for conflict resolution or peace-building.

How can we find examples of these strategies? Who can we reach to ask how well they worked? Where is the rigour in reporting that we have come to expect in other sports-related projects? Further, none of the many recommendations made by the Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group propose the creative use of the internet and its many advantages for the direct benefit of individuals, sports groups, NGOs working in conflict resolution and those seeking guidance from other fora. As with so many peace-related initiatives, the advantages of technology and analysis have yet to be successfully applied.

Time for a new approach

With the spirit of the Olympics still firmly in the memory of those in London, this is the time to rectify this continuing failure to bring together the best examples we can find in this field. We must demonstrate our firm commitment to translate into reality the jointly held wish of the 193 Member States of the UN who co-sponsored the Olympic Truce resolution in the General Assembly. We believe that they felt this was no vague aspiration,

rather a commitment which they would follow through to:

- a) observe the Olympic Truce within the UN Charter of the United Nations, individually and collectively, throughout the period of the two Games,
- b) cooperate with the IOC and Paralympics to use sport as a tool to promote peace, dialogue and reconciliation in areas of conflict **during and beyond the period** of the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Next steps

We aim to:

- 1] Generate a wide support base, using the good offices of the Young Diplomats in London and the Westminster UNA Young Professionals networks.
- 2] Establish a launch format for the database, identifying key fields

- 3] Generate an initial funding stream from
 - a) supportive foundations and individuals
 - b) fund-raising initiatives
- 4] Identify suitable proprietary software
- 5] Undertake trials using examples of good practice provided by supportive countries
- 6] Populate and launch the world database

Timetable

The project will progress so that, in pilot form, it may provide a useful resource during the debate *Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the*

Olympic idea that will follow the Olympic Truce resolution proposed by the Russian Federation during the UN General Assembly's 68th session.