



General Assembly Second Committee Topic Background Guide

Topic 2: Sport for Peace and Development¹

29 September 2012

Sports are “physical contests.” They are organized games that, unlike leapfrog, are pursued not simply for the joy of play but, like football, to determine a winner.² Historically, cultures and countries had unique games and differed in the importance accorded to the joy, health, or beauty of the game itself compared to the aim of determining and rewarding victors. For example, the Japanese football game kemari (a precursor of hacky sack) is a “noncompetitive ritual performance” without winners and losers.³ By contrast, the aim of each sport at the ancient Greek Olympics was to determine a winner, who received “a wreath or garland,” as well as “widespread adulation and often lavish benefits from his home city.”⁴

Cultures and countries have also differed in the meaning they give to victory. The ancient Greeks focused on the pride of competitors in a job well done and the pleasure of the gods in human prowess. By contrast, the Romans emphasized sports’ entertainment value for spectators,⁵ even bringing spectators into the action of deciding whether gladiators would fight to the death.⁶ Others used sport to establish or legitimate status and power hierarchies. “For the Nuba of southern Sudan, ritual bouts, for which men’s bodies were elaborately decorated as well as carefully trained, were the primary source of male status and prestige.” Similarly, Egyptian leaders referred to their skill in hunting and archery to demonstrate their fitness to rule.⁷

Sport has also been used for social purposes. In some cultures, it was part of fertility rituals. For example, Igbo men of Southern Nigeria wrestled to encourage crop fertility. Other groups such as “the Yala of Nigeria, the Fon of Benin, and the Njabi of the Congo,” used wrestling between boys and girls to “symbolically encourage human fertility.” Still others used the results of contests to determine marital partners: “Among the Diola of the Gambia, adolescent boys and girls wrestled (though not against one another) in what was clearly a prenuptial ceremony. Male champions were married to their female counterparts.”⁸ Elsewhere, sport figured in death rituals. In Etruscan (pre-Roman) Italy, gladiatorial contests were held at funerals to provide “companions for the deceased.”⁹

¹ This background guide was written by Karen Ruth Adams, MMUN faculty advisor, and Ashley Zuelke, 2008 ECOSOC Chair. Copyright 2012 by Karen Ruth Adams.

² “Sports,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, online edition, p. 1 of 24, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/561041/sports>, accessed 30 September 2012.

³ “Sports: History,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, p. 1. See also Japanese Imperial Household Agency, “Kemari (Ancient football game of the Imperial Court,” <http://www.kunaicho.go.jp/e-culture/kemari.html>, accessed 30 September 2012.

⁴ “Olympic Games,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, online edition, p. 1 of 32, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/428005/Olympic-Games>, accessed 30 September 2012.

⁵ “Olympic Games: Demise of the Olympics,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, pp. 1-2.

⁶ “Gladiator,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, online edition, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/234706/gladiator>, accessed 30 September 2012.

⁷ “Sports: History,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, pp. 1, 3.

⁸ “Sports: History,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, p. 1.

⁹ “Sports: History,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, p. 4.

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Despite their many and varied purposes, because sports are physical contests, they have always had either the explicit aim or the indirect effect of developing physical prowess that could be used in war. As a result, there has always been a strong connection between sports and military conflict. Given the connection between sports and war, there has also historically been a connection between sports and international power. States have used sport to demonstrate their power, and they have used their power to promote their favored sports and to have the privilege of hosting international games.

At the same time, however, global participation in international games such as the Olympics have contributed to greater understanding of both the variety and the similarity of people from all cultures and countries of the world. This is because sport has a “convening power”¹⁰ – it is a universal concept that brings peoples and countries together. Since its re-establishment in 1896, the Olympic Games have served as a global forum for states representatives to meet others on a level playing field on which all participants must play by the same rules and respect one another. Sometimes, participation in the games has been the only contact between estranged nations.

Because sports develop physical prowess, encourage leadership and teamwork, and instill a sense of pride, they can contribute to individual and national development. As participants learn skills and develop them through discipline and hard work, they increase the “human capital” of their states, which enhances its ability to participate in world markets. States that host international games may also benefit economically from increased tourism, international investment, and media exposure.

Given these contradictory elements of sport – competition, war, and power on the one hand and international understanding and individual and national development on the other -- what could and should the GA-2 do to insure that sports contribute to international peace and development?

History and Current Events

To understand and respond to the challenge facing the GA-2, it is necessary to understand the historical connection between sports, war, and power politics. In addition, it is helpful to consider the contribution that sports do and could make to international understanding and cooperation, as well as to individual and national development.

The Historical Connection between Sports, War, and Power Politics

When warfare consisted of man-to-man conflicts, skills such as outrunning an opponent, wrestling him to the ground, and injuring or killing him with a punch, a rock, a pointed stick, or an arrow were vital to individual and group survival. Thus early sports were essentially war games; they were efforts to build skills that could be used on the battlefield. Sports involving horses and chariots were much the same; they provided a laboratory for practicing the skills and developing the equipment that could be used to attack and conquer other groups.

This perspective on sport is consistent with its early use. The ancient Greek Olympics, for example, did not bring participants from all over the world. They were “technically restricted to freeborn Greeks,” although many competitors “came from the Greek colonies on the Italian peninsula and in Asia Minor and Africa.”¹¹ The early Olympics were not, therefore, an effort to bridge international differences except within lands already conquered by the Greeks. After Rome conquered Greece in the 2nd century AD, the Romans allowed the Greeks to continue with the games for a while, then outlawed them as pagan rituals.¹²

The Olympics were revived in stages, first as Greek national games in the 1850s, then as British games in the 1860s, and finally as international games in 1896. The idea for an international Olympics came from William Penny Brookes, an English educator, and was taken up by Pierre de Coubertin, a French aristocrat. Initially,

¹⁰ United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP), “Why Sport?,” <http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/sport/home/sport>, accessed 30 September 2012.

¹¹ “Olympic Games,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, p. 1.

¹² “Olympic Games,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, p. 2.

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Coubertin saw the games as a way to make French men more “manly[,]...disciplined, and self-reliant,” and, thus, the French state more competitive in interstate war and politics.¹³ Later, he said their purpose was “the pursuit of peace and intercultural communication.”¹⁴

The first modern Olympics were held in Athens in 1896. Since then, they have been held every four years, except in 1916 (due to World War I) and in 1940 and 1944 (due to World War II). The winter Olympics began in 1924 and until 1994 were hosted by the same country and in the same year as the summer games. Since 1994, the winter and summer games have been hosted by different countries and celebrated two years apart.¹⁵

The 1896 Olympics in Athens featured about 280 male athletes from 21 countries.¹⁶ The 2012 London Olympics had about 10,500 male and female athletes representing 204 National Olympic Committees (NOCs).¹⁷ The number of NOCs is larger than the number of UN member states because until 1996 the IOC admitted NOCs from groups that lacked political independence, such as the British and US Virgin Islands.¹⁸ Today the Charter states that each NOC must represent a country, defined as “an independent state recognized by the international community.”¹⁹

Whether a country is admitted to the Olympics depends on its ability to form a NOC that is deemed by the IOC (a group of individuals from many countries) to act in accordance with the Olympic Charter. Historically, admission has been quite political. For example, German and Japanese teams were banned until 1952 due to their instigation of World War II.²⁰ Later, when the IOC recognized the NOC from the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), the US and other Western-bloc host countries repeatedly denied visas to East German athletes.²¹

South African teams were banned by the IOC from 1970 to 1991, due to South African laws separating black and white teams.²² From 1992 to 1995, Yugoslavian (Serbian and Montenegrin) teams were banned in

¹³ Louis Menand, “Glory Days: What we watch when we watch the Olympics,” *New Yorker*, 6 August 2012, available at http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/atlarge/2012/08/06/120806crat_atlarge_menand?currentPage=all

¹⁴ “Pierre, baron de Coubertin,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, online edition, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/140008/Pierre-baron-de-Coubertin>, accessed 30 September 2012.

¹⁵ Olympic Games: History of the Olympic Winter Games,” p. 5.

¹⁶ Olympic Games: History of the Modern Summer Games,” p. 7,

¹⁷ International Olympic Committee (IOC), “London 2012: All Facts,” <http://www.olympic.org/london-2012-summer-olympics>, accessed 30 September 2012.

¹⁸ United Kingdom, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, “Written evidence from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Updating the Foreign Affairs Committee on developments on IOC recognition of Overseas Territories,” June 2010, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmffaff/writev/overseas/ot22.htm>

¹⁹ International Olympic Committee, *Olympic Charter*, 8 July 2011, Article 30.1, p. 62, http://www.olympic.org/Documents/olympic_charter_en.pdf

²⁰ “Helsinki 1952 Olympic Games,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, online edition, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/972417/Helsinki-1952-Olympic-Games>, accessed 30 September 2012.

²¹ Jeremy Goldberg, “Sporting Diplomacy: Boosting the Size of the Diplomatic Corps,” *Washington Quarterly*, 23:4, Autumn 2000, p. 65.

²² Youssef M. Ibrahim, “Olympics Committee Ends Its Ban On Participation by South Africa,” *New York Times*, 10 July 1991, <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/07/10/sports/olympics-olympics-committee-ends-its-ban-on-participation-by-south-africa.html?ref=internationalolympiccommittee>

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accordance with UN Security Council sanctions on the state due to alleged war crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina.²³ Serbian and Montenegrin athletes were, however, allowed to compete as independent participants. In 2012, an athlete from Kosovo sought similar status but was denied by the IOC.²⁴

Many countries have boycotted the Olympics, as well as other international games, such as World Cup soccer tournaments. For example, the Soviet Union boycotted the Olympics until 1952. The most coordinated boycotts of the Olympics occurred towards the end of the Cold War, when the US and 29 of its Western bloc allies boycotted the 1980 games in Moscow in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In 1984, the USSR and its Eastern bloc allies reciprocated by boycotting the Los Angeles games.²⁵

At the 1952 Olympics, the “convening power” of sport was evident when the USSR went from boycotting the games to insisting on a separate Olympic village for Eastern European athletes and later opening the village to visits from athletes from all countries.²⁶ Yet the ability of sport to stoke nationalist fervor was also apparent in the lengths to which the Soviets went to ensure that their athletes would win and the way Western bloc nations emulated the Soviet use of “scientific methods in the search for the ultimate sports performance.” As a result, Olympic match-ups were often seen as Cold War battles.²⁷

Although sport is often seen as a substitute for war, sports have actually triggered international conflicts. In 1932, “violent tactics” by British cricket players in a match with Australia created a diplomatic incident and inspired Australians to become more independent from the British.²⁸ In 1969, animosity surrounding a 1969 World Cup qualifying match between El Salvador and Honduras sparked the “Football War,” in which thousands were killed in five days of fighting.²⁹ The ethnic violence of the Yugoslav War in the mid-1990s may also have been precipitated by a football (soccer) game.³⁰ At the 2012 Euro Cup, a football match held in Poland and Ukraine, 15 people were injured in fights that broke out before a Polish-Russian game held on a Russian national holiday.³¹

Hosting the Olympics and other international competitions provides an opportunity for states to boost their national image. For example, the 1936 Berlin Olympics are notorious for Nazi propaganda.³² The 2008 Beijing Olympics opened with a ceremony emphasizing the benefits of harmonious, authoritarian order. Throughout the games, “[f]or the global audience, Chinese leaders stressed global cooperation and peace,” while domestically they

²³ UN Security Council, Resolution 757 (1992), 30 May 1992, operative clause 8.b, p. 15, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/011/16/IMG/NR001116.pdf?OpenElement>

²⁴ Julian Borger and Peter Walker, “London 2012 Olympics: Kosovo athlete barred from competing,” *Guardian* (UK), 25 May 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/sport/2012/may/25/london-2012-olympics-kosovo-independent>

²⁵ Goldberg, “Sporting Diplomacy,” p. 65.

²⁶ “Helsinki 1952 Olympic Games,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

²⁷ “Sports: History,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, p. 6.

²⁸ “Sports: History,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, p. 9.

²⁹ “Football – a matter of life and death,” BBC, 15 March 2002, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A702848>.

³⁰ Krisine Hoglund and Ralph Sundberg, “Reconciliation through Sports? The case of South Africa,” *Third World Quarterly*, 29:4, June 2008, pp. 805-818.

³¹ Luke Edwards, “Euro 2012: 183 arrested after Polish and Russian clash as march descends into violence on Russia Day,” *Telegraph* (UK), 13 June 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/football/competitions/euro-2012/9327483/Euro-2012-183-arrested-after-Polish-and-Russian-clash-as-march-descends-into-violence-on-Russia-Day.html>

³² Howard Berkes, “Nazi Olympics Tangled Politics and Sport,” National Public Radio, 7 June 2008, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=91246674>

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talked “about rallying the nation around a common cause, ... earning international respect and admiration for China.”³³ The 2012 London ceremony emphasized the benefits of democracy and freedom and reminded the world of British contributions to industry, politics, and culture.

Since the modern Olympics began in 1896, there have been 48 summer and winter games.³⁴ Of these, just three have been hosted by less-developed countries (Mexico in 1968, South Korea in 1988, and China in 2008). The US has hosted more games than any other country (4 summer and 4 winter), followed by France (2 summer and 3 winter). Pressure to diversify the hosts contributed to the IOC’s decision to award the 2016 summer games to Brazil. According to sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein,

Fidel Castro was ... correct when he exultantly described the vote as the “triumph of the Third World.” Nor was it just any country of the Third World that won the vote. It was Brazil, one of the rising giants of the South. Lula himself said after the vote: “(Brazil) went from being a second-class country to a first-class country, and today we began to receive the respect we deserve.”³⁵

No African country has ever hosted the Olympics. South Africa did, however, host the 2010 World Cup.

Developed countries are more often awarded the Olympics and other international competitions because they are able to put together competitive and persuasive bids with plans for housing athletes and spectators, constructing state-of-the-art arenas, providing security,³⁶ and, in the past, bribing IOC officials.³⁷ Thus as today’s developing countries rise economically, it is more likely they will host the Olympics and other international games.

As that occurs, it is possible they will push for inclusion of more of their own traditional games. The vast majority of the 26 sports played at the 2012 summer Olympics were developed or standardized by the British and spread via colonialism. The only other countries that originated more than one of the current Olympic sports are the US (basketball, volleyball, and the triathlon) and Germany (handball and gymnastics).³⁸ One of the few non-Western games currently played at the Olympics is judo, which originated in Japan and was introduced when Japan hosted the 1964 games. Another is kayaking, which came from pre-Columbian North America. Both have been changed so much that they bear “little resemblance” to the originals.³⁹

For less-powerful states, participating in international sporting competitions is a chance to “beat [powerful states] at their own game.” In one of many examples, “[i]n 1896 a team of Japanese schoolboys soundly defeated a team of Americans from the Yokohama Athletic Club in a series of highly publicized baseball games. Their victories ... were seen as a national triumph and as a repudiation of the American stereotype of the Japanese as myopic weaklings.”⁴⁰

³³ Mary Kay Magistad, “China’s Olympic Run – Part I: The Beijing games merged calls for citizen sacrifice and global harmony,” YaleGlobal, 27 August 2008, available at <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=11250>

³⁴ IOC, “Olympic Games,” <http://www.olympic.org/olympic-games>, accessed 30 September 2012.

³⁵ Immanuel Wallerstein, “The Olympics and Geopolitics,” Commentary No. 267, October 15, 2009, <http://www.iwallerstein.com/the-olympics-and-geopolitics/>

³⁶ Brad R. Humphreys, “The Economic Legacy of the 2010 World Cup,” *Forbes*, 15 June 2010, <http://www.forbes.com/2010/06/15/world-cup-economics-south-africa-opinions-contributors-brad-humphreys.html>

³⁷ Jeré Longman, “OLYMPICS; Corruption Is Extensive, I.O.C. Official Finds,” *New York Times*, 22 January 1999, <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/22/sports/olympics-corruption-is-extensive-ioc-official-finds.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>

³⁸ Menand, “Glory Days.”

³⁹ Allen Guttman, *Games and Empires: Modern Sports and Cultural Imperialism* (New York: Columbia University, 1994), p. 138.

⁴⁰ “Sports: History,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, p. 9.

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There have been two terrorist attacks on Olympic games: one by Palestinians against Israeli athletes in 1972 in Munich and one by an American in 1994 in Atlanta. According to a Palestinian terrorist, “we recognize that sport is the religion of the western world...so we decided to use the Olympics, the most sacred ceremony of this religion, to make the world pay attention to us.”⁴¹

The relationship between sports, war, and power politics is complicated, old, and strong. As a result, it raises many questions about whether sports actually contribute to international peace and cooperation. For example, as journalist Louis Menand asks, “are we meant to be reassured, by the closing ceremony, where the athletes commingle without regard to who won medals or what nations they represent, that those we have ‘defeated’ in the Game of Life have no hard feelings?”

The Contribution of Sports to Peace and Development

According to Wilfried Lemke, UN Special Adviser to the Secretary General on Sport for Development and Peace, “Sport has a crucial role to play in the efforts of the United Nations to improve the lives of people around the world. Sport builds bridges between individuals and across communities, providing a fertile ground for sowing the seeds of development and peace.”⁴²

From this point of view, although the countries that participate in the Olympics and other international competitions are unlike in terms of their material power and level of development, they are similar in that (with a few exceptions) they are independent states. Just as the annual GA Plenary debate symbolizes the sovereignty of each UN member state, international games such as the Olympics and World Cup symbolize their people and accomplishments. Both serve the diplomatic function of “symbolising the existence of a society of states”⁴³ and the possibility that, over time, that society will grow stronger in mutual respect and cooperation.

In pursuit of this goal, in 2001, the General Assembly created the position of Special Adviser to the Secretary General on Sport for Development and Peace and, with it, the Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP).⁴⁴ With regard to peace, the UNOSDP has encouraged a return to “the Olympic truce” in which states commit to refraining from attacks on athletes as they travel to and participate in the games.⁴⁵ Despite its name, the truce does not call for ceasefires in ongoing wars for the duration of the games. As IOC spokeswoman Giselle Davies said when war between Russia and Georgia broke out on the first day of the Beijing Olympics, “The sad reality is that out of the nations who were parading last night a number of them are in conflict and in an ideal world it's not something we would like to see. We can only bring the ideals of how sport can bring people together as friends.”⁴⁶

The UNOSDP has also enlisted well-known athletes from around the world to become “goodwill ambassadors” and “champions for sport,” who fundraise and promote the activities of UN and its affiliated agencies to promote peace and achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).⁴⁷ Some athletes fulfill this role without

⁴¹ Quoted in Goldberg, “Sporting Diplomacy,” p. 65.

⁴² United Nations, “Sport for Development and Peace,” <http://www.un.org/themes/sport/>, accessed 8 October 2008.

⁴³ Hedley Bull, “The Functions of Diplomacy,” in Phil Williams, Donald Goldstein, and Jay Shafritz, *Classic Readings of International Relations*, 2nd ed. (Wadsworth, 1999), p. 269.

⁴⁴ UNOSDP, “UN Resolutions and Declarations,” <http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/sport/home/resourcecenter/resolutions>, accessed 30 September 2012.

⁴⁵ IOC, “Olympic Truce,” <http://www.olympic.org/content/the-ioc/commissions/international-relations-/olympic-truce/>

⁴⁶ Paul Kelso, “Olympics: Beijing 2008 - News of Ossetia conflict reaches Russian and Georgian Olympic teams,” *Guardian* (UK), 9 August 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/sport/2008/aug/09/olympics20082>

⁴⁷ UNOSDP, “Why Sport?” See also UNOSDP, “Goodwill Ambassadors,” <http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/sport/home/unplayers/goodwillambassadors>, accessed 30 September 2012.

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any special designation. For example, after scoring the winning goal in a 2003 World Cup qualifying match, Rwandan soccer player and former refugee, Jimmy Gatete, returned to his country to help children affected by the 1994 genocide.⁴⁸

UNOSDP and other organizations also promote the use of sport to build connections between divided communities. For example, organizations in Israel use football to bridge the gap between Palestinian and Israeli children. Similarly, in Northern Ireland, where sport was once a “theatre for cross-community” animosity between Loyalist and Republican factions, sport has been recognized as essential to the peace process.⁴⁹ Integrating sports has also been an important part of the South African transition away from apartheid.⁵⁰

UNOSDP also works to promote development goals, such as health and education, by encouraging UN agencies to provide children in less-developed countries and refugee camps with the resources to play games and a safe place to play. In response, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has worked to ensure that physical and health education are offered in schools, that recreation opportunities are given to youths with little means to play, and that families are encouraged to participate.⁵¹ In 2005, UN High Commissioner for Refugees worked with FIFA to provide Sudanese refugees with football equipment.⁵² The UN Economic, Social, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has sponsored sport for peace initiatives in Central America and West Africa, including efforts to establish a sports school in Senegal and reduce HIV/AIDS in Mozambique.⁵³

Some of the most controversial elements of the sport for peace and development agenda revolve around accessibility, or the right to participate in sports. Different UN member states place different emphasis on the importance of involvement by people of all kinds, including people from different racial and ethnic groups, women, and people with disabilities.⁵⁴ In recent years, UNICEF has worked with FIFA and celebrity soccer players such as David Beckham to draw attention to the plight of girls who are abused or forced into labor.⁵⁵ In addition, UNOSDP and the IOC successfully pressured the three countries that had never brought female athletes to the Olympics (Saudi Arabia, Brunei, and Qatar) to do so in 2012. Despite these efforts, many gender equality issues remain, including the large disparity in medals available to men and women, the tendency to sexualize female athletes (for example, requiring skimpy bikinis for female beach volleyball players), and invasive tests by the IOC to determine whether participants are female (there are no equivalent tests for males).⁵⁶

⁴⁸ Mark Kielburger and Craig Kielburger, “Sports help push peace message,” *The Toronto Star*, 4 August 2008, <http://www.thestar.com/News/GlobalVoices/article/472038>

⁴⁹ Chelsea School, “Anyone for Football for Peace? The challenges of using sport in the service of co-existence in Israel,” *Soccer & Society* 9:3, July 2008, p. 406.

⁵⁰ Høglund and Sundberg, “Reconciliation through Sports?,” pp. 805-818.

⁵¹ United Nations, “Common Ground: Sport as an Innovative Tool for Development and Peace,” 30 June 2004, <http://www.un.org/special-rep/ohrls/ldc/ECOSOC2004/BF-UNFIP%20and%20UNICEF.pdf>

⁵² Andrea Sadecky, “FIFA and the United Nations: educating the most underprivileged through sport,” *UN Chronicle* 43:4, December 2006, pp. 40-41.

⁵³ United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, “Sport for Peace and Development,” available at <http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/ev.php>; accessed 14 September 2008.

⁵⁴ International Platform on Sport and Development, “Sport and Gender” and “Sport and Disability,” available at http://www.sportanddev.org/learnmore/sport_and_gender/index.cfm and http://www.sportanddev.org/learnmore/sport_and_disability2/index.cfm, accessed 30 September 2012.

⁵⁵ Sadecky, “FIFA and the United Nations,” pp. 40-41.

⁵⁶ Jeré Longman, “Before Games, Wins for Women,” *New York Times*, 13 July 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/14/sports/olympics/before-london-games-wins-for-women.html?_r=1 See also

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Human rights in countries that host the international games are also a point of contention. States that object to China's human rights policies were put in the awkward position of deciding whether "the show would go on" when China cracked down on Tibetan protesters, continued to censor the internet and support the government of Sudan, and arrested people who applied for permits to enter the official protest zones near the arenas.⁵⁷ When the IOC decided to hold the games in Beijing, its members were aware of the stains on China's record. But they "believed in the inherent power of the games." According to the IOC's former director general, François Carrard:

We are totally aware there is one issue on the table, and that is human rights. Either you say because of some serious human rights issues, we close the door, deliver a vote that is regarded as a sanction and hope things evolve better. The other way is to bet on openness. We are taking the bet that we will see many changes.⁵⁸

Committee members felt strongly that, by focusing the world's attention on China, they could advance the country's transition to democracy, much like the 1988 Summer Games in South Korea.⁵⁹ Four years after the games, there are few, if any, indications that Chinese human rights have improved.

The economic costs of the games have also been questioned. According to most economists, countries that host the games do not see enough of an increase in tourism and investment to offset the economic costs of bidding on the games and developing and securing the Olympic village, hotels, and transportation networks.⁶⁰ As a result, like Greece after the 2004 Athens Olympics, they may end up burdened with debt.⁶¹ In addition, there is the challenge of maintaining costly sites despite lack of demand for them. As a developing country, South Africa has found this especially difficult in the wake of the 2010 World Cup.⁶²

How the economic and social costs of hosting international competitions are distributed within countries is another point of contention. For example, to prepare for the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 summer Olympics, Brazil is radically altering the landscape of Rio de Janeiro at the expense of poor residents, and this is causing social and political conflict. According to the *New York Times*, "residents in some of the favelas, or slums, who face eviction are pulling together and standing their ground, in stark contrast to the preparations for the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, where authorities easily removed hundreds of thousands of families from the city for the Games."⁶³

Juliet Macur, "I.O.C. Adopts Policy for Deciding Whether an Athlete Can Compete as a Woman," *New York Times*, 23 June 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/24/sports/olympics/ioc-adopts-policy-for-deciding-whether-athletes-can-compete-as-women.html>

⁵⁷ Nicholas D. Kristof, "Malcontents Need Not Apply," *New York Times*, August 16, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/17/opinion/17kristof.html>

⁵⁸ Jeré Longman, "Why China Has the Torch," *The New York Times*, 3 August, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/03/sports/olympics/03longman.html>

⁵⁹ Longman, "Why China Has the Torch."

⁶⁰ Toni Johnson, "The Economy of the Olympics: Interview with Jose Ursua, Economist, Goldman Sachs," Council on Foreign Relations, 10 August 2012, <http://www.cfr.org/economics/economy-olympics/p28806>

⁶¹ Nick Malkoutzis, "How the 2004 Olympics Triggered Greece's Decline," *Business Week*, 2 August 2012, <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2012-08-02/how-the-2004-olympics-triggered-greeces-decline>

⁶² Humphreys, "The Economic Legacy of the 2010 World Cup."

⁶³ Simon Romero, "Slum Dwellers Are Defying Brazil's Grand Design for Olympics," *New York Times*, 4 March 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/05/world/americas/brazil-faces-obstacles-in-preparations-for-rio-olympics.html>

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Previous Committee Work on This Topic

Although the Olympics were reconstituted in 1896 after a 1500-year hiatus, international organizations did not begin to work to promote the political, economic, and other benefits of sport until 1922, when the IOC and the International Labour Organization (ILO) first collaborated. A further shift occurred in 1978, when the UNESCO adopted the International Charter of Physical Education and Sport, which asserts that physical education is a human right and cites the need for coaching, facilities, research, and information for all people, especially children.⁶⁴

In 2001, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed the first UN adviser on sport for development and peace to network between the UN and private and public sports organizations. After the 2002 Winter Olympics, Annan convened the first International Conference on Sport & Development.⁶⁵ Annan also was crucial to a UN partnership with the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) to promote football as a positive activity.⁶⁶

In 2003, the UN kicked off a series of biannual “Next Step” conferences, where sport and policy practitioners meet to plan ways to increase the development benefits of investing in sport. In 2005, the conference agreed to the Livingstone Declaration, which affirms the importance of sport and physical activity in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The 2011 recent conference was held in Trinidad and Tobago.⁶⁷

At a 2004 high-level Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) meeting, delegates urged expansion of sports programs in governments, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the country level, and called for dialogue between and fundraising by public and private sports partners and for funds.⁶⁸

In 2005, the UN convened a meeting with foreign policy leaders at the Athens Olympics, laying the groundwork for the General Assembly to declare 2005 the International Year of Sport and Physical Education. As part of the yearlong effort to promote education, health, development, and peace, the UN formed the Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group. The Group consists of representatives from 15 countries, directors of UN agencies, and non-governmental organizations.⁶⁹

Spurring and responding to each of these initiatives were GA resolutions calling attention to the role sport can play in promoting peace and development. The most recent resolution (2011) urged member states to observe the Olympic truce and work with the IOC and other organizations using sport to achieve the MDGs.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ UNESCO, “Timeline of Major Developments in Sport and Development,” http://www.sportanddev.org/en/learnmore/history_of_sport_and_development/timeline/, accessed 30 September 2012. See also “International Charter of Physical Education and Sport,” 1978, http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13150&URL_DO=DO_PRINTPAGE&URL_SECTION=201.html

⁶⁵ International Platform on Sport and Development, “Timeline of major developments.”

⁶⁶ Andrea Sadecky, “FIFA and the United Nations: educating the most underprivileged through sport,” *UN Chronicle* 43:4 December 2006: 40-41, available at http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1309/is_4_43/ai_n27100110/pg_2?tag=artBody:coll1; accessed 15 September 2008.

⁶⁷ UNESCO, “Timeline of Major Developments in Sport and Development.”

⁶⁸ United Nations, “Common Ground.”

⁶⁹ UNESCO, “Timeline of Major Developments in Sport and Development.”

⁷⁰ United Nations General Assembly, Resolution A/Res/66/5, 8 December 2011, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/459/12/PDF/N1145912.pdf?OpenElement>

Montana Model UN High School Conference

Conclusion

The use of sport for peace and development faces many challenges. Perhaps this is why in recent years the UN has placed more emphasis on the use of sport at the individual and community level to improve health, promote human rights, and spur economic development than at the national and international level to promote peace. Yet if prowess and participation in sports leads to international competition and war, this could lay the seeds for future conflict. Is it time for the GA to think outside of the box about how sports could and should be organized? In developing your country's position on this issue, consider the following questions:

- What is the history of sport in your country? What were its traditional games, and what was their primary purpose?
- What is your country's history with the Olympics? How long has it participated? Does it often win? Has it ever hosted or asked to host one of the games? Has it ever boycotted a game or been banned? Has it ever urged a ban against another state? How does it explain these positions?
- What is your country's military history, level of development, and human rights record? What role has sport played (and what role could it play) in improving in these areas?
- Is your country a beneficiary or supporter of UNOSPD programs? Why or why not?
- What can the GA-2 do to encourage UN member states and the IOC to improve the contribution of future Olympics to peace and development? For example, should the Olympic truce be expanded to include a ceasefire in all ongoing hostilities, and should states be banned if they fail to comply? Should victory and nationalism be de-emphasized by discontinuing awards ceremonies or creating international teams? Should developed countries help African states enter a bid for future games and develop and protect sites, or should the tradition of rotating hosts be abandoned to reduce economic and environmental costs and save money that could be used to attain the MDGs? What other innovative approaches to sport could promote peace and development?

Recommended Reading

International Olympic Committee (IOC). Available at <http://www.olympic.org/>

On this site, you can read about your country's experience with the Olympics and learn about IOC programs to promote peace and development, including Olympic Solidarity, which raises funds to help train athletes from less-developed countries, and the Youth Olympic Games (YOG), which feature mixed gender and mixed nationality teams.

"Sports." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Online edition. Available at <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/561041/sports>

This article contains a detailed history of sport in many countries and regions. Another article on the Olympic Games provided discusses the accomplishments and challenges of host countries.

United Nations. "Millennium Development Goals Report 2012." Available at [http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/MDG/english/The MDG Report 2012.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/MDG/english/The_MDG_Report_2012.pdf)

This report provides an overview of the MDGs and progress on their attainment to date. It will give you ideas about how your country could use sport to promote domestic and international peace and development.

United Nations Office on Sport for Peace and Development website (UNOSPD). Available at <http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/sport/>

This website is the gateway to all UN programs on sport for peace and development. It provides access to the most recent annual report (on the publications page), which summarizes programs in a variety of countries, and as well as relevant GA resolutions and human rights treaties, and links between sport and the MDGs (on the Factsheets page). See also the sources in footnotes 47, 53, and 64.