

"Challenging the gender order"

**Opening keynote speech at the
Fourth World Conference on Women and Sport
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I. Achievements, gaps and challenges in challenging the gender order – the broad global context

Gender equality and empowerment of women is a development goal in its own right and is essential for the achievement of other goals in all socio-cultural, economic, political and environmental areas. The positive links between gender equality and empowerment of women and effective and sustainable development are very clear. Women represent half the resources and half the potentials of families, communities and nations. The Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, once said that there was no development tool more effective than the empowerment of women. Heads of State attending the 2005 World Summit at the United Nations last September stated that progress for women was progress for all.

Global goals on gender equality and empowerment of women, endorsed by the Member States of the United Nations, are found in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in 1995, and in many other outcomes of important intergovernmental processes, including in particular in the context of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The actions required to ensure the fundamental rights of both women and men, have been clearly elaborated over the past three decades through the world conferences on women organized by the United Nations. The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted in 1995, involved a major breakthrough in several respects. It clearly established the responsibility of governments for promoting equality between women and men and endorsed an explicit human rights perspective and a strong focus on the empowerment of women. There was also evidence of a shift from viewing equality between women and men as a 'women's issue', and increased focus on the need for changes in attitudes and behaviour of men and boys.

In addition, 182 Member States of the United Nations have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which was adopted by the United Nations in 1979. The Convention addresses the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of women, in both public and private spheres of life. Both direct and indirect discrimination is prohibited in the convention, including laws, policies or programmes and conduct which may appear to be gender-neutral, but nonetheless have disproportionate detrimental effects on women. The Convention requires not only the development of an adequate legal framework but also attention to its effective implementation.

Achievement of the goal of gender equality and empowerment of women requires systematic and sustained priority attention in all policy areas. Gender mainstreaming was identified in the Beijing Platform for Action as a major strategy, alongside targeted activities for women. It requires that the contributions, priorities and needs of women as well as men are considered through gender analysis in the beginning of planning processes, in order to influence the direction of development so that both women and

men can be involved and benefit. Gender mainstreaming is the means by which policies,

Another important challenge identified is particularly relevant in the context of this conference. Government responses illustrated that attitudes towards the gender equality and empowerment of women among the general public and within bureaucracies have not changed at the same pace as policy, legal and institutional frameworks. This is one of the main reasons why practice does not match rhetoric. Stereotypical attitudes and practices are working to the disadvantage of women and girls in all areas of society – in families, educational institutions, religious institutions, cultural institutions, sporting organizations, workplaces, political bodies and in the media. Such stereotypical attitudes and behaviours can be difficult and/or sensitive to identify and address.

Experience has shown that even if leadership in organizations make clear statements about the goal of gender equality and empowerment of women, without changes in attitudes and practices at lower levels, little positive change will result. Explicitly addressing persistent stereotypical attitudes and discriminatory practices requires significant awareness raising efforts and development of mechanisms for holding people accountable for what they do.

Addressing stereotypes will require an explicit focus on men and boys. Women and girls will also need to be specifically targeted since many stereotypes have been internalized through upbringing, education, and the media. Negative attitudes and practices are often accepted as the norm by both women and men. As a result, women and girls can have negative or low expectations and self-images. Change will require significant efforts and take time. Media has a critical role to play. Good practices have been developed which can be replicated in other contexts.

The increased understanding that gender equality is not only important for women and girls but should also be a concern for men and boys, is an important achievement of the past decade. Promotion of gender equality cannot be done by women alone and in a vacuum – men and boys are affected and must be involved in the process of change. The attitudes and behaviour of men and boys can have significant impact on the lives and well-being of women and girls. In many areas of the world, these impacts are far from positive, including in relation to violence, harassment in the workplace and other areas, and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.

Awareness of this has led to increased efforts to reach and involve men and boys in positive ways. Programmes aim to change negative attitudes and behaviours that compromise the health and safety of women and girls, and to encourage men to develop egalitarian and consenting sexual relations and take responsible roles in relation to pregnancy, birth and childcare. In many countries around the world, men have mobilized in groups and networks to support, for example, campaigns to eliminate violence against women. Men are increasingly taking greater responsibility for child care, and indeed in some countries have come to demand the opportunity to do so. In some contexts, there has been a significant positive shift in involvement in family life over one generation, with benefits for women and children and men themselves.

which support a balance between family and work responsibilities for both women and men.

Training and leadership development are crucial to support women to acquire

collective work promoting sport and physical education-based opportunities for solidarity and cooperation”.

In 2005, the General Assembly adopted resolution 60/9, “*Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace*”. It also considered the contribution of sport and physical education towards achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, and the broader aims of development and peace. It acknowledged that sport and physical education can present opportunities for solidarity and cooperation in order to promote tolerance, a culture of peace, social and gender equality, adequate responses to the special needs of persons with disabilities, dialogue and harmony.

The Beijing Platform for Action addresses the issue of women and sport in the critical areas of education, health, decision-making and the girl-child. Under education, the Platform calls for accessible recreational and sport facilities, gender-sensitive programmes for girls and women of all ages in education and community institutions and support in all areas of athletics and physical activity, including coaching, training and administration, at the national, regional and international levels. In relation to health, the Platform calls for programmes in the education system, workplace and community to make opportunities for girls and women of all ages to participate in sport, physical activity and recreation on the same basis as men and boys.

In the critical area of concern on power and decision-making, the Platform notes that the under-representation of women in decision-making positions in the areas of art, culture, sports, the media, education, religion and the law have prevented women from having a significant impact on many key institutions. In relation to the situation of the girl-child, the Platform calls for promotion of the full and equal participation of girls in extra-curricular activities, such as sports, drama and cultural activities.

Article 10 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) calls for States Parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure equal rights with men in the field of education, and in particular to ensure, inter alia, the same opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education. Article 13 calls for States Parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure the same rights for women and men, in particular, inter alia, the right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.

Gender equality perspectives on sport

Existing social constructions of masculinity and femininity - or socially accepted ways of expressing what it means to be a man or a woman in a particular socio-cultural context - play a key role in determining access, levels of participation and benefits from sport. Sport has often been associated with men and masculinity. This has had negative implications for both men and women. It can, for example, result in sport being considered inappropriate for women and can lead to the outright exclusion of women or

While it is important to focus on specific targeted activities on women and sport, particularly where there are significant gaps and barriers to women's equitable participation and benefits, the overall goal should be to promote equality through ensuring attention to both women and men as an integrated part of all activities. Women cannot promote gender equality and empowerment of women in sport by acting alone, and should not be expected to. Men, particularly those in positions of power, have to be involved in the process of change and take on leadership roles.

Benefits for women and girls of increased participation in sport and physical education

There is increased understanding of the important role sport can play for gender equality and empowerment of women. While perhaps overstating the issue somewhat, the American suffragist, Susan B. Anthony, highlighted the importance for women and girls of participation in sport by noting in 1897 that: that "*Bicycling has done more to emancipate women than any one thing in the world*". It fires the imagination to consider the kinds of changes being able to bicycle must have meant for women 100 years ago – in terms of getting outside the household, increasing avenues for social interaction, allowing a whole new range of physical movements for women and girls. Women's Association of the United States, 1907

Equitable access and participation

The Brighton Declaration in 1994 called for a sporting culture that values and enables the full involvement of women in every aspect of sport. Sport is an integral aspect of culture and covers a wide range of activities, including both for recreation and for competition. Participation in sporting activities involves attendance at events, participation in events - including competitive events, and participation in sports organizations. The equal opportunity to be involved in sport and physical education in its broadest sense - for leisure and recreation, promoting of health and wellbeing, or for competition, is the right of all women and men, girls and boys.

Both horizontal and vertical segregation persist, however, in sporting activities and sporting bodies. Horizontal segregation or discrimination exists because women and girls do not have access to the full range of activities available to men and boys. Vertical segregation is experienced when women and girls do not participate in management and leadership roles to the same extent to men and boys.

Generally around the world women have less access and opportunities to participate in and benefit from sporting activities than men. Women's involvement in sport varies, however, in different socio-economic and socio-cultural contexts. Women are not a homogenous group. Some groups of women and girls may have additional constraints as a result of, for example, factors of race, religion, language, and disability. These could include physical constraints in terms of restricted mobility or dress codes in some contexts. In developing sport policies and programmes, it is important to recognize the diversity and difference among women.

Women's and girls' access to and participation in sports have, however, increased over the last few decades. It is important to recognize and celebrate the gains and achievements that have been made. Many important barriers have been broken down and doors have been opened, largely through the persistent efforts of women and girls themselves, many of whom are probably represented in this room today. In the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, for example, women competed in 26 of 28 sports and 135 events (45 percent). Women represented 40.7 percent of the total number of athletes competing, setting a historical record for women's participation in the Olympic Games.

Despite progress made, there are still significant gaps and challenges in relation to the access and participation of women and girls in sport which must be clearly identified persted in lye

Participation of women and girls varies across time and space and although some barriers are common across the world, many are also context-specific. Gender norms and stereotypes, including notions of femininity and masculinity, affect the attitudes of both men and women towards sports and towards women's participation in sports. For example, in sports which are seen as male domains, women may have little incentive to become involved; women's physical capabilities can be perceived as inferior; and, accepted norms of behavior for women may exclude them from participation in some sporting activities.

While both men and women can suffer from a lack of safe and appropriate sport facilities, resources, training opportunities, technical support and access to incentives and rewards, these constraints are often exacerbated for women. For example, the unequal sharing of household and family responsibilities limits their free time. The risk of sexual harassment and abuse makes appropriate timing and location of activities critical. In addition, the lack of female role models and mentors is a significant constraint for women and girls.

Because of the lower status and valuing of specific sporting activities for women and girls, they do not have the same variety of opportunities and facilities as men. The range of opportunities provided for girls and young women does not always address and accommodate their aspirations, attitudes, and experiences and provide them with opportunities to develop physical fitness and basic sport skills.

The attitudes of men to women and their roles in sport – including among athletes, coaches, managers and officials, broadcasters, sponsors and the general public - is also a major constraint. A recent example in USA was the derogatory remarks made by a prominent New York Mets broadcaster about women's presence in the dugouts – including “I won't say that women belong in the kitchen, but they don't belong in the dugout”. A positive outcome was the criticism that his remarks drew from a wide variety of sources, and the attention given to the fact that the woman in question was the first

access to technologically appropriate facilities and aids, such as sporting wheelchairs and prostheses.

A number of programmes and initiatives are being implemented to improve this situation. The Sport Technical Department of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) introduced a number of successful initiatives for the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games. The IPC Governing Board has also approved targets for gender representation at the 2008 Beijing Olympics - 65 percent men and 35 percent women. Much more needs to be done to increase participation and access at the grassroots and recreational level, which in turn will allow more women with disabilities to proceed to national and international competitions.

Access to decision-making

Although women's participation in sporting activities has increased in recent years in local, national and international contexts, women are still significantly under-represented in decision-making and as leaders in sporting bodies and institutions. Further

The benefits cited from the initiative by the women themselves included the increases in women's influence in the NOCs, in participation of women in leadership training; in appointment of women to other committees, and in the general profile of women in sport. The Secretary-Generals of the NOCs indicated that women were among the most active members of the Executive Committees. The study found that 49 percent of these women also served on Women's Committees.

Among the constraints identified was the structural issue of getting women nominated and elected from a constituency of National Federations whose representatives were predominantly and traditionally male. There was concern that, despite the IOC initiative, the structure of National Federations might remain untouched. There was a recognition that successful implementation of the targets will not necessarily lead to policy changes in support of women's increased participation in decision-making. The critical importance of the IOC initiative in setting an example and providing moral leadership to the world of sport on equitable representation of women was, however, noted.

While the establishment of targets in the world of sport is very positive, it should be noted that these are lower than the 30 percent target set for all decision-making bodies by 1995, as well as the 60/40 percent targets set for local authorities. It is also critical, as recognized in the evaluation report on the IOC initiative, not to view the targets as "ceilings" for women's participation, but as minimum requirements for women's representation.

Other important initiatives have been taken to support women's participation in decision-making in sport. The International Olympic Committee, in cooperation with Olympic Solidarity, has established a programme of regional seminars for female view 05rily leag net isk0.57thin the 102support; encsemag10.63 0tivcrit069erationry pcoace

Cooperation ensures that girls are represented among peer leaders who provide support to other members of the group. Similarly, in the Mathare Youth Sports Association in Kenya, at least one girl is appointed to each of the councils and committees that serve as decision-making bodies for the organization.

As more women serve in leadership and decision-making positions, their influence as role models has the potential to encourage women to participate at all levels in the sporting world. A research project, "This could be you!", was carried out in Austria as part of the International Year on Sport and Physical Education. It presented female athletes in top sports as role models for girls and women. Long-term mentorship has also been identified as an important means of providing the encouragement and moral support necessary for developing an enabling enviro

Women's sports and the media

Despite the call for media to positively portray and significantly cover the breadth, depth, quality and benefits of girls' and womens' involvement in sport in the Windhoek Call for Action in 1998, there is still very far to go before women's sports are given equitable treatment in the media, both general media and speciality sports media. The exclusive promotion of male sports idols in the media can create or exacerbate unequal perceptions of the value of male athletes and male-dominated sporting activities compared with women athletes and women's sport. Media coverage can also disseminate negative gender images and perceptions of women projected by some male sports idols. In addition, one can question the role models for boys and young men being projected.

The multi-billion dollar sports-media industry is primarily focused on men's sport, with little attention paid to women's sporting events. While many local, national and international competitions include both men's and women's events, the men's events invariably dominate in media attention at all levels. For example, in the United States, the media coverage ratio between male and female professional sports in 2004 was 95 to 1 in US television and 20 to 1 in US print medi

women and girls at risk of violence if they have to travel after dark. Affordable and reliable transportation, appropriate hours for events and safe sporting locations are all important criteria for increasing women's and girls' participation in sports.

The risk of violence may also stem from resistance to the challenging of gender boundaries and the asserting of independence that women's and girls' participation can represent. Women and girls may face physical and social punishment from family or community members who see their involvement in sport as inappropriate. Women and girls may also risk verbal harassment, including of a sexual nature, from male players or spectators because their participation is seen as a departure from accepted gender roles. For example, girls playing football as part of the Mathare Youth Sports Association in Kenya spoke of the taunts and jeers of the boys who teased them as they walked in the community and of the risk of being harassed by street boys near the playing field.

The dominance of men in coaching and management also reinforces traditional patriarchal power hierarchies. The abuse of power by coaches and managers may lead to exploitation and physical and verbal sexual harassment. To address this issue, the NGO, Women Sport International, has taken an important step in encouraging all sports organisations to establish codes of ethics and conduct for coaches; foster a climate of open discussion about sexual harassment and abuse; incorporate these issues into coach education programmes; introduce reporting and mediation systems; and adopt rigorous screening procedures for the appointment of all personnel. This is an issue which other

Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) Confederations Cup in 2005. This issue is of concern to many in the context of the World Cup 2006 in Germany. Organizers are expecting about 3 million, mainly male, spectators. This concern on the linkages between sport and the demand for prostitution is increased by the risk of the use of human trafficking to fill the demand. Interpol has noted that *“prostitution networks set up specific organisations to take advantage of major sporting events”*. In the run-up to the World Cup 2006, NGOs are preparing a number of initiatives, such as multilingual hotlines, shelters for victims of trafficking and outreach activities to women in their home countries. A number of NGOs, including the Coalition against Trafficking in Women (CATW), have launched campaigns to ask football players and teams to make a public stand on the sexual exploitation of women linked to sport, but to date have had little success in mobilizing support.

Other important efforts for women and sport

Efforts have been made within sports organizations at different levels to promote women’s access, involvement, and benefits. This is reflected in the current Olympic Charter, adopted in 2004, which states that one of the roles of the IOC is to *“encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels and in all structures with a view to implementing the principle of equality of men and women.”*

Institutional mechanisms have been put in place to support this work. In 1995, the IOC established a Working Group on Women and Sport, which was elevated to the status of a commission in 2004. The Commission on Women and Sport, which meets once a year, monitors the participation of women in the Olympics as well as their representation in decision-making. On the basis of its recommendations, an action programme was developed. The Commission also conducts a number of promotional activities, for example, the IOC’s Women and Sport Trophy, introduced in 2000, which is awarded annually.

Conferences and meetings have been used effectively over the past decade. Since 1994 World Conferences on Women and Sport have assessed the progress made, and defined priority actions to increase the involvement of women. The declarations of principles and calls for action emanating from these conferences have provided important guidance. The conferences have also provided critical space for sharing of case studies and success stories on how sport has impacted positively on the lives of women and girls, as well as how involvement of women and girls makes positive contributions to sport

Greater attention should be given to influencing organizational cultures – ensuring that values, attitudes and procedures within organizations are more conducive to women’s equitable participation in change. Increased attention to work-life balance would be important – through ensuring appropriate meeting times and provision of child-care facilities for both mothers and fathers.

Identifying male allies among athletes, coaches, managers, and other leaders, including in the media, and establishing strategic partnerships in promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women will be an important strategy for the future. Since much power and authority currently remains in the hands of men, men in leadership positions have a special responsibility to work for constructive change. Men must be encouraged to play a more visible supportive role. Training for men on gender equality issues in sport and practical ways to address them will be an important strategy. Men should also be encouraged to develop positive role models for boys and young men.

Further developing secure and supportive environments for women and girls in sport should continue to be a high-priority issue. In particular efforts should be made to ensure that men with positions of power in women’s sport – such as coaches and managers - do not abuse their power and the trust placed in them. Effective accountability mechanisms must be put in place.

Collaboration in pursuit of the important goals outlined will be essential. There are of necessity many different actors involved in this important work – men as well as women. The impact of efforts of all actors will be increased through close collaboration – sharing of experiences and lessons learned, and where appropriate, coordination of efforts.

The International Year of Sport and Physical Education in 2005 provided potential for increased systematic attention to gender equality and empowerment of women in sport. While gender perspectives were not systematically incorporated into processes, important opportunities have been created. The International Year has generated considerably increased attention to the issue of sport at all levels, and there will be important follow-up processes which should be more systematically and effectively influenced from a gender perspective. Concerted efforts should be made to build on the momentum created by the International Year to move positions forward on women and sport.

The Division for the Advancement of Women, where I work, for example, will collaborate with UN colleagues, including the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport and Development, to ensure that follow-up work incorporates significantly more attention to gender equality and empowerment of women. The Division will also produce a publication on women and sports which will be widely disseminated to Member States, NGOs and other stakeholders to raise awareness and

commitment to the issue. The publication involves collaboration with key actors in the women and sports movement, including, among