

**<UN-IOC Forum> Session II
Sports Diplomacy – The WTF Experience**

**Proliferation of Peace through Sport
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I would like to begin by expressing my profound appreciation for the privilege and honor to address all of you here today. For me, this UN-IOC Forum brings to reality a long envisioned partnership for these two international organizations that I have long revered.

The weight of sport as a catalyst for peace and harmony can never be underestimated. Sport has the power to bring people together, bridge differences, and promote communication and understanding. The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to promoting a peaceful and better world. The International Olympic Committee is assigned this mission to promote this Olympic ideal throughout the world and lead the Olympic Movement with the concerted, organized, universal and permanent action inspired by the Olympic values.

One effective way to do so is utilizing its network of relations with the sport-related institutions, such as National Olympic Committees, International Federations, NGOs, and the sports industry, and the UN organizations. Considering that the UN and the IOC share common ground in their ultimate goals, together they have the ability to dramatically promote peace and harmony throughout the world by means of sport.

Modern-day history has shown that sport is not only a viable channel to be used to broker peaceful exchanges between nations, but the very stage on which resolution begins. The WTF is a model of this as members of our very own Council from Israel and Iran believe in putting aside political differences, sitting together in friendship and respect under the name of sport, and work toward a goal of peace and hope.

The WTF also believes in being, truly and completely, a sport-for-all. It is our belief that no person should be discriminated against; not because of their age, gender, nationality, religion, or physicality. One example of this is the recent adjustment to the WTF competition rules to allow women of the Muslim faith to wear hijabs during competition so that they may not be left out.

As a result, we have seen a growing rise in participation by women in West Asia and Africa. Not only have we answered a call for equality for women, but also equality for women of a particular faith. (SPC Timeline Slide)

These beliefs are the driving forces behind my vision of a project of peace and development charged by the world of sport. Inspired by John F. Kennedy's US Peace Corps, I envisioned a Sport Peace Corps, in which each sport of the world dispatched teams to deliver dreams as a source of strength, peace as a path to follow, and the Olympic spirit to serve as a guide.

I first unveiled my dream of a Sport Peace Corps in 2007 at an international workshop on sports and peace in Leuven, Belgium, and also in Monaco at a Peace and Sport forum. I continued the call for a Sport Peace Corps in 2008 at the 6th IOC World Forum on Sport, Education and Culture in Busan, Korea. The World Taekwondo Federation in 2008 implemented the WTF Taekwondo Peace Corps as a pilot program. Since then, the program has been institutionalized by the creation of the World Taekwondo Peace Corps Foundation. (TPC Activity Slide)

In the past three years, the WTF Taekwondo Peace Corps has grown to be greatly prosperous in its endeavor to spread the values and virtues offered by sport, so well: self-reflection, discipline, confidence, courtesy, patience, self-control, and respect for everyone. From these, youth learn that there must be equality in humanity, no matter of gender, religion, origin, or physical ability. They learn the importance of maintaining their health. They learn that they must contribute and help those in need, and to work together. Moreover, they learn.

As of this past winter, 207 taekwondo instructors have been dispatched to 35 different nations around the world to teach the culture and virtues of taekwondo. Each team has been comprised of 4 competent taekwondo university students, 3 taekwondo masters who are qualified for taekwondo education, and 1 person who has proficient language skills to serve as an interpreter. Educational packages including training booklets, CDs, uniforms, and other equipment were sent along with them to each region they were dispatched.

The WTF member national associations in each respective country offered supplementary assistance including accommodation and transportation.

For the most underdeveloped of countries, the WTF Taekwondo Peace Corps and its contributors pay for all expenses necessary for service. *(TPC Video Slide)*

The WTF Taekwondo Peace Corps teams were warmly welcomed and appreciated by the host countries. But above all, the Taekwondo Peace Corps presented an opportunity and resources for their youth to enjoy and play, and share a vision of never-ending hope, optimism, and confidence. They were provided with the tools for sound personal development and self-enhancement to curtail them from getting involved in youth delinquency, drugs, alcohol, and violence.

These pilot years have allowed us to expand our horizons with this project. The Taekwondo Peace Corps program will continue with a twice-a-year, short-term dispatch for 2 months and a long-term dispatch of instructors for 6 months to two years, targeting more recipients and a larger number of countries. *(MNA Map Slide)*

The Taekwondo Peace Corps will be expanded worldwide, based in as many countries as possible and incorporating qualified taekwondo instructors of different nationalities.

The expansion will be founded on a close consultation with the 191 WTF member national associations around the globe.

The successes have been many and have put forth an example for International Federations, the IOC, and the UN the endless possibilities for a full-fledged Sport Peace Corps. Based on our experience, I propose moving forward in developing the Sport Peace Corps program to expand the initiative globally. I call on all International Federations, the IOC, and UN institutions, as well as all networks of relations and sponsors to band together in making this a reality.

The Olympic ideal behind developing sports is “to contribute to building a better and more peaceful world by educating youth through sport practiced without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play.”

On May 11th at the ribbon cutting of the Olympic Youth Development Centre in Lusaka, Zambia, President Rogge launched “Sports for Hope.”

This is a program to provide the youth of developing countries with the same opportunities as those in developed countries to practice sports and to be educated on the values of Olympism.

But there are those beyond whom both the WTF Taekwondo Peace Corps and the “Sports for Hope” have so far targeted.
(UNHCR Slide)

As of 2009, the UNHCR set the number of refugees or persons in refugee-like situations at nearly 10 and a half million. Internally Displaced Persons, or IDPs were nearly 14 and a half million and Stateless persons at over 6 and a half million. The total population of concern by the UNHCR is nearly 34 and a half million persons worldwide. This is a population that needs us.

These populations’ livelihoods, their dreams, are held hostage by war and strife, by tyranny and deprivation. These were not acts of their own choices, but rather the misfortune of their origins. While those who wish to prey on these circumstances of anguish see an opportunity of recruitment for their deadly deeds, we must see this as a window to bring hope. We have the ability to build a home of dreams for them.

All sports should be a human right; a commodity owned by the people, to be used and shared by everyone. (*SPC Aims Slide*)

The Sport Peace Corps entails provisions of comprehensive sport-related assistance to not only underdeveloped countries, but any UN assigned areas. The assistance includes providing equipment, and skills and training for local athletes and coaches for any Olympic Sport in countries in need. This gives hopes and dreams to the young people who are deprived of the opportunity to learn while promoting friendship, peace and understanding through sport and international interactions. All of these efforts will be done at the same time as sharing the Olympic spirit and the United Nations' aspirations for peace. (*Final Slide*)

I am encouraged by the initiation of this program, and I know that it can be expanded by collaborative efforts between the UN and the IOC. I have shared the successes of the pilot WTF Taekwondo Peace Corps, and my vision of a Sport Peace Corps both with President Rogge and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon. As steps by both organizations move towards such cooperative work, I can see my vision becoming a reality.

The world needs help and hope. They need pride and a sense of integrity. It is true that clothes are needed. Houses, food, and money are needed. But more than anything else, the world needs dreams to dream and goals to reach for. Taekwondo and the World Taekwondo Federation are doing their parts to bring these dreams. But more can be done. The UN and the IOC together with International Federations can build a coalition, a Sport Peace Corps to deliver all of these things.

I wish to close this by thanking you again for allowing me to share with you the successes of the WTF Taekwondo Peace Corps, and my vision to expand the concept. The realization of my hope of a Sport Peace Corps will further promote the Olympic ideal, and offer opportunity to a wider range of countries to partake in international sporting events; a place where they can showcase their athletic talent while enjoying the priceless life experience.

I assure you that taekwondo will be at the forefront all the way in the course of realizing this vision of sharing love and hope with the world through sport.

Thank you.