

Joint Statement on the impact of COVID-19 on sport, physical activity and well-being, and its effects on social development by United Nations member states

1. Convinced of the valuable contribution of sport and physical activity in promoting education, sustainable development, peace, cooperation, solidarity, fairness, social inclusion and health, we strongly support the findings of the UN/DESA Policy Brief #73 on “The impact of COVID-19 on sport, physical activity and well-being and its effects on social development”.
2. The World Health Organization recommends that all healthy adults do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity per week and children at least 60 minutes per day.
3. In this time of hardship, despite our many urgent priorities, sport and physical activity remain essential for our well-being. They benefit both our physical and mental health and help mitigate stress and anxiety.
4. Although we have had to adjust almost every aspect of our daily lives due to Covid-19, it is important to ensure that we stay healthy by including daily exercises and fitness routines, even if they have to be adapted. We have an opportunity to find new ways to stay active and healthy, while respecting physical distancing requirements. In this regard, the practice of sport and physical activity, even within small spaces, has often been a beacon of normalcy during the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. Many of the technological tools we use every day to work and socialize have also been easily and quickly adapted to help us take part in physical activities, with the help of online classes and tutorials. There may be opportunities to develop this further in the future. These tools have also allowed us to maintain social contacts and feel part of a community, which helps to overcome the challenges imposed by isolation, including self-quarantine. In many cases, even when exercising alone, we remain part of a sporting community, which can act as an important social lifeline.
6. Nevertheless, we recognize that a large proportion of humanity does not yet have access to internet and many live in precarious situations or overcrowded homes. This is not to mention the difficulties faced by people in situations of conflict or post-conflict. But as we look to an end in these conflicts and the development of peaceful societies, sport can have a role to play. In this regard, we welcome the General Assembly resolution 74/16 on building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal.
7. Across the world, the postponement or cancellation of professional and amateur sporting events, whilst taken for security and safety reasons, have affected us all.
8. We salute the efforts undertaken by all stakeholders, such as international and national sports federations and entities, which have already begun working on rescheduling, when feasible, sporting events.
9. We are convinced that the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020, as well as all postponed events will have, when convened, a very special place in the history of sport. They will stand as a symbol of human unity and solidarity in the aftermath of this pandemic. We commend highly the strenuous efforts exerted by the relevant stakeholders with regard to the postponement.

10. International cooperation needs to be bolstered and strengthened at all levels. No one shall be left behind; all sectors must be used as catalysts for change and every opportunity should be seized to accelerate sustainable development.
11. In this regard, we welcome the memorandum of understanding signed on 17 May 2020 between the International Olympic Committee and the World Health Organization. All other examples of solidarity, collaboration and joint sensitization campaigns should also be recognized and encouraged.
12. We consider that the sport ecosystem is an important sector to consider in terms of economic activity, since it represents millions of jobs worldwide and generates both direct and indirect revenues through the various competitions and events that attract millions of fans and supporters.
13. We are convinced of and remain committed to continue advocating in favour of the social dimension as well as the cross-sectoral and far-reaching impacts of sport and physical activity.
14. In addition to the specific response to COVID-19, holistic approaches to health and well-being must be further supported. Reinforcing the health sector shall also mean further emphasizing the importance of preventing health-associated risks and non-communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and obesity, through healthy diets and lifestyles and regular engagement in physical activity.
15. Play and physical activity are of particular importance for the development of children and youth who benefit from the values of respect, openness, teamwork, excellence and effort as well as from a health perspective.
16. We believe that sport can help build more inclusive, equal and resilient societies. As a truly universal language, sport can overcome barriers, change perceptions, build mutual understanding and trust, and bring people together.
17. We reaffirm the importance of access to sport opportunities for all, in particular children and women, persons with disabilities, elderly persons, and persons in vulnerable situations, without discrimination of any kind.
18. Supporting and promoting sport and physical activity are relevant in achieving the SDGs and strengthening the resilience of our economic and social systems.
19. We therefore call on all States to include sport and physical activity in their recovery plans post COVID-19 and to integrate sport and physical activity in national strategies for sustainable development.