

**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,
Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of International Day of Sport
for Development and Peace**

6 April 2022

On this International Day, our Organization celebrates the virtues and universal values of sport, and would like to recall how much sports practice, which allows us to have “a healthy mind in a healthy body”, also carries an ethic of living together and of peace – an ethic that we particularly need in these troubled times.

By learning to join forces with a team, observing rules of respect, equity and fair play – even in defeat – sportsmen and sportswomen are promoting citizenship and peace.

It is these rules, and above all the values and ethics of sport, which UNESCO promotes and defends, particularly through the International Convention against Doping in Sport – the only international standard that brings together 191 governments cooperating to preserve the integrity of sport.

Sport, as the COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us, is also central to the psychological well-being of individuals. The decrease in physical activity is therefore a major issue for both physical and mental health, which is all the more worrying as it particularly affects young people today.

Inequalities in access to sport, whether social or geographical, exacerbate all vulnerabilities and take root in mentalities. In the field of sports, stereotypes are hard to break, especially gender stereotypes.

In order to fight these inequalities, they must be measured and understood. We are working closely with the International Olympic Committee and UN-Women – with whom we have founded the Global Observatory for Women, Sport, Physical Education and Physical Activity, whose mission is to identify more clearly the remaining barriers to women’s access to sport.

Encouraging the practice of sports for all is also the challenge of the first phase of UNESCO’s “Fit for Life” initiative, which will make it possible to draw up a major inventory of sports practices. This work will thus inform worldwide reflection on the integration of sport in public policies, not only in the field of sport, but also health, education and youth.

This will also require broad mobilization, which is why we are working with development banks in the Coalition for Sustainable Development through Sport to improve financing for sport, particularly in Africa.

On this Day, UNESCO would like to recall the following simple message: sport is more than a practice, it is also an ethic.