



Statement by Sri Lanka

40th Session of Human Rights Council

General Debate under Agenda Item 5: Human rights bodies and mechanisms

13 March 2019

Social Forum 2019 - Possibilities of using sport and the Olympic ideal to promote human rights for all and to strengthen universal respect for them

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka is pleased to join this debate today, not only given its active engagement in this year's Social Forum, but also the significance of the broader theme of the session - sport and human rights, a subject being close to the hearts and minds of our people. The deeply entrenched values of collective spirit, ability to tolerate both success and failure alike, respect for rules of the game as well as for fellow competitors could and must be practiced and embraced beyond the playground as well.

We want to thank OHCHR for bringing together 10 interconnected themes related to sport and human rights that enabled an eminent group of panelists ranging from scholars to sportspersons to show their valuable views and experience. The interactive process led to the active consideration of several important voluntary recommendations including the need to respect for human rights guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by all sport governing bodies and other stakeholders at all times including in decision making processes, allowing equal opportunities in the field of sport, fair play etc.

In Sri Lanka, we bear witness to the fact that when it comes to sports other factors such as religion, ethnicity or any other field becomes irrelevant, and sports idols are considered iconic heroes by the people of Sri Lanka, as they represent the spirit of unity, reconciliation and ability to change the attitudes of their fans and the society as a whole. Sports has always been a unique factor that helped mending broken hearts and minds due to a brutal conflict that ravaged every aspect of Sri Lankan society for thirty long years. The documentary screened during the Forum spoke about sports, and its contribution to human rights, peace building and reconciliation and unity in Sri Lanka.

The contribution to sports in empowering women and girls and those differently abled remains significant. Every effort must be taken to eradicate discrimination in the field of sports. It should be an avenue to achieve the highest attainable mental and physical health for all. Sports can also be a powerful medium to drive national and international efforts to eliminate the menace of drugs and its influence on society. International partnerships will play a major role in eliminating drugs from all sport events. Further, respecting fundamental rights including labour rights in all mega sport events sets standards for equality and respect for the dignity of all involved –players, facilitators of events including construction workers as well as media.

We believe that sports remains a catalyst as it touches upon many human values and fundamental rights. We must make every endeavour to underpin sports, and human rights in our collective and individual efforts to realize the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development including right to development. It is a possibility within our reach in this digital era.

I thank you.