

**Fortieth session
of the Human Rights Council**

**Statement by the
Chair-Rapporteur of the 2018 Social Forum**

**13 March 2019
Geneva**

Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege to present to you the report of the 2018 Social Forum of the Human Rights Council, which I had the honour to chair.

The Social Forum took place from 1st to 3rd October 2018 and its report is contained in document A/HRC/40/72. As requested by HRC resolution 35/28, the session focused on the possibilities of using sport and the Olympic ideal to promote human rights for all and to strengthen universal respect for them.

The Social Forum brought together over 300 participants, including sportswomen and sportsmen at the grassroots level and Olympic medallists. It provided a platform for a vibrant multi-stakeholder dialogue, which enabled the participation of representatives from governments, UN and other intergovernmental bodies, sports governing bodies, activists, academia and the private sector. Parallel to the main discussion, last year's Social Forum also had a wealth of side events which included roundtables, music and movie presentations.

More than 40 invited speakers contributed to 10 panels discussion on key issues and themes concerning the human rights and sports. Commencing with a discussion on the relationship between human rights and sports and the Olympic ideal, the meeting culminated with a dialogue on the way forward, which summarised the main issues raised, conclusions and recommendations of the panels.

Mr. President,

We take this opportunity to highlight some of the main recommendations that emerged from 3 days of interactive and forward-looking discussions.

The Social Forum recommended that all stakeholders should respect, protect and consider all human rights in the context of sports. They should guide their actions by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, core human rights treaties, the Declaration on the Right to Development and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and other instruments such as the Olympic Charter, the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport. Furthermore, the 2030 Agenda, the Kazan Action Plan and follow-up mechanism, and the United Nations Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace can help inform this process.

Participants recommended States to leverage sport to contribute to human rights protection and achieve the 2030 Agenda by working in collaboration with all interested stakeholders, including the sports community, civil society, international organizations and businesses.

The Forum argued that sports and mega sporting events should serve as a platform to promote human rights and more peaceful, inclusive, just and equitable societies and international order. Athletes, as role models, should be encouraged to stand up for human rights. The Forum also argued that physical education, physical activities and sport

should be inclusive and based on human rights values. Upcoming sports and new technologies should embed human rights by design.

Participants emphasized that sports and mega sporting events should respect and consider the human rights of especially affected groups, populations and peoples. The planning, implementation and follow-up to sports policies and events should rely on transparent processes, include human rights impact assessment and due diligence dimensions, and provide effective grievance mechanisms for possible violations. The voices of those affected should be taken into account at all times. Decision-making bodies should ensure diversity, including by promoting gender equality. Special sporting events of certain groups –such as indigenous peoples, women, youth, LGBT persons, and others–should be encouraged as a means to broaden opportunities and highlight specific challenges faced by them.

The Forum recommended that players and other workers in the context of sports should enjoy rights to representation and to organize for their own rights. Migrants, including undocumented migrants, should have their freedom of association and labour rights respected and promoted in the context of sports.

Participants were of the view that sports policies and events should be based on multi-stakeholder collective action at all levels. Relevant United Nations organizations, in particular OHCHR and UNESCO, should continue to provide guidance on sports and human rights and engage actively with governments, the sports movement, the Centre for Sport and Human Rights and other relevant stakeholders.

Participants also recommend that the Centre for Sport and Human Rights should consider mapping initiatives and disseminate good practices on the promotion of reconciliation, peace and understanding through sports, especially in conflict and post-conflict scenarios.

Finally, the Forum recommended that sports-related reporting should adopt a human rights-based approach to data, and human rights indicators should include sport-related indicators. Human rights mechanisms should continue to consider sports and sporting events in their reports and recommendations. We encourage you all to read the full report, of which I have some illustrated copies, which I can share.¹

Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We call on this Council to take due note of the conclusions and recommendations of the Social Forum in its action. We hope that the Council will undertake further actions to contribute to the realization of human rights and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the context of sports.

On our part, we take this opportunity to assure you of the unwavering commitment of Sri Lanka to resorting to sport and the Olympic ideal to promote human rights for all and to strengthen universal respect for them, as well as to promote development, peace and reconciliation. This was illustrated in the short documentary we presented during the first day of the Social Forum. In conclusion, it is

¹ The printing of these copies was made possible with the kind support of the State of Qatar. The report is also available at the OHCHR's webpage.

our considered view that the editions of the Social Forum over the past 10 years cannot remain disparate exercises, and a serious initiative should be considered to connect all themes covered by the different editions of the Social Forum, so that they can be integrated into the SDGs and human rights fully, while they serve as a useful corpus for future initiatives in advancing this social dialogue in an inclusive and sustained manner.

Last year speaking at the opening of the Social Forum, I said this: “Sports, like diplomacy, has the potential to bring together all actors or participants, beyond the immediate theatre of competition. They both encourage camaraderie and solidarity to achieve shared objectives. The ‘win-win’ in sports, as in diplomacy, is to remain engaged, to build and maintain momentum, and to reach the finish-line of pursuit”.

As I conclude my presentation today, I would reiterate that this pursuit should continue unfazed, with even more vigour, at a time when expressions and acts of hate by fringe elements and misinformation are increasingly targeting professionals in both disciplines.

We express our sincere gratitude to all those who participated in and contributed to the 2018 Social Forum. Our special thanks to the Secretariat – OHCHR as well as other organizations for their untiring efforts, which helped ensure the excellent organization and success of the session.

We thank you for your kind attention.
