World Youth Forum on Sport, Culture and Peace
26 August 2014
Nanjing, China

Concept paper

Objectives and themes of the Forum

The objective of the World Youth Forum on Sport, Culture and Peace, to be held on 26 August 2014 in Nanjing on the occasion of the Youth Olympic Games and jointly organized by the Nanjing Youth Olympic Games Organizing Committee (NYOGOC) and UNESCO, is to contribute to peace through youth development and civic engagement, sport and culture, while also promoting Nanjing as a city of peace, culture and world heritage. Intended as a biennial event, its aim is to position young women and men as key actors in the integration of culture and sport as fundamental components of human development and an enduring peace.

As such, the Forum’s participants, including young athletes, young leaders, experts in the themes of the Forum, sport champions, civil society representatives, members of relevant youth organizations, youth with a close interest in sport, as well as young women and men in general, will discuss three main topics:

- **Youth, violence prevention and peace**
The objective will be to discuss the means to reinforce the participation of young women and men at local level, particularly in urban settings, so as to engage them as meaningful actors of peace and community development and prevent violence affecting them. A special focus will be placed on young women and the engagement of vulnerable youth.

- **Sport for social inclusion**
Sport, including traditional sport and martial arts, will be approached as a socially integrative force and the conveyor of values of peace, particularly among youth. Accent will be placed on the use and role of sport in urban areas.

- **Heritage and creativity for sustainable development**
Emphasis will be laid upon the contribution of culture to community development and dialogue, through the promotion and protection of world, including intangible and city heritage as well as actions in favour of creativity and innovation.
The panels on each of these topics will be designed as a dynamic interaction between the
panelists as well as the Forum’s participants, and will include the sharing of good practices
by young leaders in each of the fields.

The expected result of the Forum is to raise the awareness of young women and men of the
possibilities to engage as leaders and social innovators in their communities, through
initiatives related to sport and culture, thereby promoting their development and civic
engagement, while also promoting Nanjing as a city of peace and culture.

In the run up to the Forum, online discussions will be convened to enable participants as well
as other youth to interact, discuss the Forum’s topics and share knowledge and good
practices, with a view to shaping a set of concrete recommendations in the fields of sport,
culture and peace that will be included in a “Nanjing Initiative” as a concrete output of the
Forum.

The objective of the “Nanjing Initiative” would be to ensure the Forum’s continuity, by
outlining, on the basis of the on-line pre-Forum discussions and the Forum’s debates, the
priorities of its future editions. As such, in addition to including recommendations in the
fields of sport, culture and peace, it would also launch a call for projects in these areas as a
concrete follow-up to this first edition of the Forum, or any other concrete initiatives that
may be decided by the participants.

Focusing on youth

Youth comprise 25% of the world’s population. As they make the transition to adulthood,
young women and men shape, develop and deploy their human and social capital. It is
during this period that they make important decisions about their lives and their ethical,
social, economic, political and civic positioning and role. Their choices and the way they
decide to pursue them have a significant impact not only on their own lives but also in the
opportunities for human development in their societies and communities.

The young women and men of this world are not the problem in our societies today, but
they are the solution. Youth can identify innovative and intelligent solutions to ongoing
challenges and, through their creativity and networking capacity, contribute in implementing
them and in building bridges across sectors and actors, between cultures as well as between
tradition and modernity. Their energy, creativity and critical spirit have already been amply
demonstrated. If provided with an enabling environment, they can channel this energy into
efforts that will benefit peace and sustainable development for both present and future
generations.

It is therefore necessary to improve investments in research, policies and programmes to
create an enabling environment for youth to prosper, exercise rights, regain hope and a
sense of community, and engage as responsible social actors.

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1 Ref. World Youth Data Sheet, Population Reference Bureau, 2013
UNESCO advocates the importance of working with and for youth, striving to provide them with such an enabling environment. As emphasized in the Organization’s Operational Strategy on Youth for 2014-2021, it engages them as beneficiaries, actors and partners, working to provide them with the needed skills and opportunities to be agents of change for peace and sustainable development, across all UNESCO’s fields of competence. Through a holistic approach aiming at empowering youth, UNESCO thus promotes policy formulation and review with the participation of youth; undertakes capacity development for their transition to adulthood; and fosters youth civic engagement, democratic participation and social innovation.

**Sport and culture for youth engagement in peace and development**

Both sport and culture, through their respective practices and characteristics can greatly contribute to enabling and promoting youth inclusion and engagement as change-makers in their societies. At the same time, they can only fulfil such potential if their practice is inclusive and open to all groups of youth, particularly young women as well as those that could be more prone to exclusion or vulnerability.

One of the major advantages of sport is that it establishes the equality of all participants through the respect of a corpus of norms. Irrespective of a player’s origin, religion, ethnicity or social background, the “rules of the game” apply to all, and in the same way. Thus, it can break down stereotypes pertaining to gender and disability, galvanizing positive change and drawing individuals together, building bridges and promoting peace and reconciliation, as well as providing facilities and access to community services. Importantly, sport also plays a significant role in promoting positive lifestyles among youth and offering constructive activities that can contribute to their integration in society. Sport programmes engaging youth can lead to a reduction in negative patterns of behavior by increasing self-confidence and self-respect which enhance integration and inclusion.

The UN System has been emphasizing a “Sport for all” approach, whereby no barrier or discriminatory practice should exclude individuals or groups from the benefits of sport and physical education. Such approach is endorsed by the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, which celebrates the power of sport to bring people of different cultures together around shared values, raises a flag for the importance of sport to healthy lives and resilient societies, and highlights its key role in promoting gender equality and empowering young people.

Sport is leveraged as a catalyst to advance global objectives in education, towards inter-cultural dialogue, civic engagement of young people, social cohesion and development. The International Charter of Physical Education and Sport, adopted by UNESCO’s General Conference in 1978, established the guiding principles for public policy development in this field and guaranteed the right of access to sport and physical education. The Charter celebrates the fundamental values of physical education and sport and embraces the

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2 [http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002202/220254e.pdf](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002202/220254e.pdf)

approach of the Olympic Movement, which seeks to create a way of life “based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example, social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles”. UNESCO’s work in this area is thus founded on the principle of equal access for all. In this regard, the Organization places emphasis on initiatives that promote sport values among young women and men, as well as increase capacities and opportunities for youth to engage in development and peace through sport. These were also the messages of the 5th International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS V), held last May in Berlin, Germany, which underlined sport as a force for social inclusion and recognized “the opportunity to engage children and youth through targeted sport programmes designed to reinforce positive human values and behavior”.

In approaching sport as a vector for social inclusion, the Forum will thus focus on sport as a socially integrative force and the conveyor of values of peace, particularly among youth, placing specific accent on the use and role of sport in urban areas.

Regarded as the “set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or a social group”, and understood in the broadest sense, culture must be taken into consideration when defining the constitutive elements of well-being, dignity and sustainable human development, based on local realities and capacities. According to UNESCO’s Director-General, Irina Bokova, “culture is what makes us who we are. It gives us strength; it is a wellspring of innovation and creativity; and it provides answers to many of the challenges we face today... We must do far more to place culture at the heart of the global sustainability agenda... at the global level and on the ground across the world.”

Culture has the power to transform entire societies, foster inclusiveness, while also forging a sense of identity and belonging for people of all ages. As a vector for youth development, it plays an essential role in promoting peace and sustainable and inclusive development for current and future generations. Youth can act as a bridge between cultures and serve as key agents in promoting peace and intercultural understanding. Investing in local cultural resources including tangible, intangible as well as city heritage, traditional knowledge and skills, as well as music, dance, theatre and festivals, can develop sustainable creative economies, open up opportunities to youth, and help strengthen identity and social cohesion. Transmitting the values of intercultural understanding, cultural diversity and creating a sustainable environment from one generation to the next is essential if the seeds of peace are to be planted and nurtured by future generations.

The UN initiates young people to these principles through involving them as active partners and stakeholders in both its on-the-ground and normative action. Engaging youth in the policy-making process contributes to better informed and equitable cultural policies and strengthens transparency, accountability and ownership. The UNESCO World Heritage

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5 Declaration of Berlin, UNESCO’s 5th International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS V)
7 Keynote address at the opening of the Seventh Annual Blouin Creative Leadership Summit, held at the Metropolitan Club in New York on 21 September 2012
Education Programme strives to give young people the opportunity to learn and embrace diversity and cultural identities, by acquiring knowledge about heritage values, protection and promotion. The driving force of the programme is the involvement of youth as a major segment of the community, taking cultural dimensions into account, encouraging them to become thinkers and actors of peace and development. Moreover, promoting creativity for and among youth and harnessing young people’s creative potential and energy is key in finding creative solutions to challenges affecting youth inclusion. The UNESCO Diversity Kit for Youth was designed to reinforce the promotion of creativity and the inclusion of cultural content in educational programmes, while illustrating the possibilities of applying the 2005 Convention on the Promotion and Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

In view of the above, the Forum’s discussion on heritage and creativity for sustainable development will focus on the contribution of culture to community development and dialogue, through the promotion and protection of intangible and city heritage, and through actions fostering creativity and innovation.

In this era of instability marked by social change, in particular in conflict and post-conflict situations, youth are the most affected. They live in vulnerable and tenuous situations without the tools to change their living conditions and life prospects. In addition, violence affecting youth is a social phenomenon that is increasingly being observed in more and more different countries. Especially in the context of social or political instability, young people are often caught in the rift between the past and a future that offers them very few opportunities.

It is therefore crucial to instil a measure of hope among young women and men, to positively channel their energy and enthusiasm towards a better future for all and to ensure that they are equipped with knowledge, skills and information necessary to cultivate a culture of peace, including social and technical competencies necessary to help mitigate conflict and promote reconciliation. As youth are both partners and stakeholders in today’s efforts to foster dialogue and mutual understanding, their meaningful participation in larger processes and a clear recognition of their expertise and initiatives are essential to the success of any endeavor in this area. If appropriately organized and supported in fact, through their participation in related socio-economic and political processes, youth can have a major role both in preventing conflicts but also in building, restoring, sustaining or promoting peace in the context of reconciliation initiatives. They can bring fresh perspectives and optimism to a historical conflict and be encouraged to look forward rather than backwards. If provided with an enabling environment, they can channel this energy into efforts that will benefit a culture of peace, for both present and future generations. This approach takes into account the need for a safer and more positive youth environment in which educational, cultural, communication and entrepreneurial alternatives to violence are made available and collective spaces for youth civic engagement and creative interaction are provided. Continuous and strengthened commitments to, and scaled-up investments in youth development and civic engagement are thus crucial to realize their potential, address persisting challenges and prevent at risk behaviours, particularly violence.

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One of the main objectives of UNESCO’s work in the field of youth is therefore to foster youth engagement to promote mutual understanding, prevent conflict and participate in building and consolidating peace. The Organization works to develop comprehensive rights-based interventions, engaging youth through artistic, cultural and sport activities as a means to prevent violence affecting them. Youth engagement in conflict prevention, reconciliation and the consolidation of peace, particularly in countries in transition, is supported through evidence-based training, youth exchanges, dialogue initiatives and action-oriented research. As an example, the Power of Peace Network (PPN) has provided an interactive platform enabling youth to develop media products to promote peace. Based on the successful experience of the Open Schools in Brazil, which was repeated in five countries in Central America and in Guinea-Bissau, UNESCO will continue engaging, or reintegrating in society, youth affected by violence through artistic, cultural, social entrepreneurship, leisure and sport activities.

The aim of one of the Forum’s debate on violence prevention and peace will thus be to discuss means to reinforce the participation of young women and men at local level and particularly in urban settings, so as to engage them as meaningful actors of peace and prevent violence affecting them.

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9 Axis 3 of the Organization’s Operational Strategy on Youth for 2014-2021
Nanjing, a city of heritage

With more than 2500 years of history, Nanjing has served 10 times as the Chinese capital and is thus well known for its culture and its historic contribution to Chinese history. Its Imperial Tombs of the Ming and Qing dynasties are inscribed on UNESCO’s World heritage Lists. The city has also been recognized by UN Habitat and various international institutions for its culture-centred urbanization, where city heritage protection and regeneration play an important part in the community’s economic, cultural and social life, thus promoting creative economy, youth employment, cultural tourism, social inclusion and sustainable development in all stages of the urbanization process.

More than half of the world’s population today lives in cities and the trend continues. Cities are struggling to provide agreeable living for an increasing population. It is a process that has improved lives, through continuous urban development and innovation. The influx of new inhabitants, the exposure of different values and visions in cities generates new ideas, spawns new models of city living and brings about new initiatives. It has however also raised challenges, such as disappearing cultural heritage and a monotonous appearance of cities. Cities do not only harbor human habitat, but are also hubs of human heritage whose conservation is of worldwide concern. As a city’s cultural heritage is also a vivid history of its development, protecting it also means preserving a city’s history, memory and unique character. Reconciling the need for urban development with the imperative of preserving heritage is thus a big challenge for every city in the world. The future of any city must adequately serve the needs of the various communities who live within and most be rooted in its own individual identity and urban heritage, thus making urban development more livable, sustainable, inclusive and creative.

City heritage thus constitutes a tremendous arsenal for world heritage preservation and plays a unique role for sustainable development. As such, it is a dedicated thematic programme of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and, in particular, the World Heritage Cities Programme and the World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme.

The cooperation between the Municipality of Nanjing and UNESCO is anchored in such an understanding, and this joint initiative of a World Youth Forum on Sport, Culture and Peace is born, inter alia, out of a will to promote Nanjing as a city of culture and world heritage on the occasion of the Youth Olympic Games hosted by the city.