

STATEMENT BY MR SHANTA KUMAR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT , ON AGENDA
ITEM NO 11 - "SPORTS FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT" AT THE 65TH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 18, 2010

**Mr. President,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am honored and privileged to participate in today's discussion on "Sport for peace and development". Let me begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report on the item under discussion.



Mr. President,

Sports are an important element in building character. It not only teaches one to be just and fair but also prepares you to face challenges in life.

Sports being a most popular activity for young people, it can help to motivate young people, build teams, develop leadership, promote volunteering, and educate apart from ensuring fitness and healthy lifestyles.

Sports also seek to promote peace, equality and friendship among all people and nations. In-fact, it is hard to imagine a more powerful medium, other than sports, to inspire and bring people together for a common purpose.

Swami Vivekananda, the great philosopher from India, when approached by a young man to explain the meaning of the Bhagwad Gita, is reported to have looked at his physique and advised him to first go play football.

Develop your body and mind, Swamiji told this young man, and then you will be better fit to study and understand the Gita.

Swamiji was clear that a healthy body and mind is fundamental in our quest for peace and sports, indeed, plays a critical role towards this end.

Mr. President,

The intrinsic linkage between sports and games and the human quest for excellence was recognized ever since the inception of human civilization. It reached its epitome in the ancient Greek civilization, which is the progenitor of the Olympic movement.

Sports, games and physical fitness were an integral component of India's civilization, as is evident from the existence of the highly evolved system of yoga and a vast range of highly developed indigenous games, including martial arts.

After our independence, the integration of physical education and sports with formal education was emphasized in the First Five Year Plan itself.

Our efforts have been for broad-basing sports and provision of modern sports infrastructure. A National Sports Policy was adopted by India in 2001.

We have also encouraged the autonomous functioning of National Sports Federations and are happy to see that today all sections of our society, including the media and the business sector, are actively involving themselves in the promotion of sports.

Mr. President,

Sports are also a most effective tool to help achieve development objectives in the areas of health, education, HIV/AIDS prevention, child protection and child development.

They help generate public awareness and inspire broad, inclusive and committed action in support of developmental agenda.

I am glad that there is good recognition of the value of sports to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals and that many sports personalities have associated with UN in creating public awareness and understanding of various issues that affect the youth and society.

In this context I am, of course, particularly happy that our national cricket icon, Sachin Tendulkar is a Goodwill Ambassador of United Nations Environment Programme and that our former tennis champion Vijay Amritraj was UN Messenger of Peace in 2001.

Mr. President,

India was honoured to host the Nineteenth Commonwealth Games, which have just concluded in Delhi.

This two weeks long mega event featured participation from 71 countries across the world and more than 7,000 athletes, who celebrated sporting excellence, human skill and endurance and above all courage and character.

These games upheld and renewed the essential spirit of peace, equality and friendship among all people and nations.

We congratulate all those countries which successfully organized large global and regional sporting events during the last year. We also wish every success to all those countries which will be holding sporting events in the coming months and years.

We believe that such mega sporting events will strengthen the cherished ties of goodwill and understanding that unite us as one family.

Thank you.

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