
'Sport is a powerful tool for social integration and inclusion'...Elite athletes tell UNAOC Forum

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May 6, 2016 By Sahr Morris Jr.

Several sports elites who also serve as Ambassadors of 'Save the Dream' have urged organisations and institutions to use sport, which they consider as a powerful tool, for social integration and inclusion.

The sports elites, including former France World Cup winner Christian Karembeu, made this call at the just concluded 7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The sports personalities used the opportunity of the forum to highlight the importance of promoting the positive values of sport to young people, especially when lots of countries continue to face many social challenges.

Addressing the audience during the 'Save the Dream' session at the UNAOC Global Forum, soccer superstar and UEFA Global Ambassador, Christian Karembeu said: "Sport has a special power to change the lives of people around the world – to promote peace and to unite people beyond regions, beyond colours. Sport has no borders and is universal.

Nelsa Curbelo, Ecuadorian Peace and Sport activist, said through sport everyone can speak the same language, adding that for her, sport is a powerful tool for integration and inclusion as she urged more organisations to embrace sport as a positive platform that can benefit society.

Speaking of her experiences within football and sport, Honey Thaljieh, the first Palestinian female football captain, said sport, and particularly football, has been an important vehicle to promote peace, break down cultural, political and social barriers and to help integrate people into society.

She said: "The power of sport in society really cannot be underestimated and through it, everybody speaks one language. This is why organisations, including FIFA's social projects and

initiatives like 'Save the Dream', are helping to harness the power of sport to further spread its many important values and to direct young people's energy in a positive way to help prevent violence and discrimination in society."

The 'Save the Dream' session was conducted under the umbrella theme of 'Sports for Peace, Sustainable and Inclusive Development'. Panelists shared their experiences about how sport has transformed their lives and played an important role in enhancing society across a number of areas, including promoting peace, sustainable development, inclusivity and integration into society, the role of sport in breaking down social barriers and promoting inter-cultural dialogue and encouraging social inclusion and cohesion and uniting people and communities.

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