



6 April 2014 - Sport is a universal language; one that unites groups and nations across divides through competition, sportsmanship and camaraderie. Yet, sports can have a profoundly dividing effect bringing out the baser nature of humanity. Competition can breed rivalry and jealousy, revealing a dark-side of human nature driven by the desire to win at all costs.

In Brazil, 29 football related deaths occurred in 2012, and 30 in 2013. Around the world the same phenomenon can be observed as inflamed passions lead to acts of brutality. In Sweden hooligans beat a 43-year-old father of four to death last week, simply for supporting the opposing team. Five more people were hospitalized in brawls that took place before the [match](#) even started.

Football is not the only sport to generate such ruthless behavior. A ballet dancer in Russia was [convicted](#) of ordering an acid attack after a feud with another dancer. Cycling legend Lance Armstrong admitted to using performance-enhancing drugs to ensure victory.

These events however reinforce the need to generate a link between sport and peace and development. Therefore, this year we celebrate the first-ever [International Day of Sport for Development and Peace](#)

Beyond eliminating barriers, sports can bridge the divides of ability, language, age, gender,

nationality and religion. The World Cup and the Olympic games are prime examples of sports inclusive nature. They can be an important way of spreading a message of peace, driving social change and helping to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

UN organizations are partnering with the [International Olympic Committee](#) to place sport at the service of humankind. The goal is to promote a peaceful society and healthy lifestyles by associating sport with culture and education. The International Paralympic Committee is also recognized for showcasing the achievements of impaired athletes and in acting as a primary vehicle to change societal perceptions of disability sport.

In 2003 many civil society organization began using April 6 as “World Day for Physical Activity”. This day promotes physical activity as essential for health and well-being. Thus, the UN has chosen this day to promote sport for development and peace. Today we celebrate sport’s values of teamwork, fairness, discipline, respect for the opponent and the rules of the game. We also recognize that they can be harnessed in the framework of advancing solidarity, social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

“I urge all global citizens to join this growing movement and become part of our team to harness the power of sport to build a better world for all” said Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in his [statement](#) today. He furthermore stresses the importance of everyone’s participation to reach the development goals and today calls “all players to the field”.