



United Nations
Human Rights

OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

UN General Assembly: Human rights expert calls for global action to eradicate racism from sports

NEW YORK / GENEVA (4 November 2013) – The United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, Mutuma Ruteere, on Monday urged all States represented at the UN General Assembly “to take appropriate measures to harness the unique potential of sports to debunk racial superiority discourses, mobilize people and convey messages about equality and non-discrimination.”

“Eradicating racism from sports is an urgent concern that requires collective action by international organizations, international sports federations, national Governments, national sports federations and civil society,” Mr. Ruteere said at the presentation of his latest report* to the global body.

In his report, the expert notes the unique role of sports in fighting racism and intolerance and in promoting solidarity and respect for diversity under a common goal. “Throughout history, team and individual sporting competitions have been based on the principle of a level playing field, with achievement not based on one’s skin colour, ethnicity or religion,” he said.

“Sports have demystified racial superiority discourses, making them an important and practical instrument for combating racism,” the Special Rapporteur stressed. *“Furthermore, sport is a positive symbol for social acceptance by conveying the image of multi-ethnic teams representing one nation and competing for a common goal.”*

“Regrettably, modern sports continue to be afflicted by incidents and patterns of racial violence, racial insults and racial intolerance on the field, as well as inside and outside arenas. In recent times, both team events, such as football, rugby, basketball, and individual professional sports, such as tennis and golf, have been marred by racist acts,” Mr. Ruteere highlighted.

The independent expert also addressed the issue of equal access by ethnic minorities to sports, including sports that are historically known as ‘white’ or ‘elite’, such as cycling, tennis, golf, equestrian events and swimming.

“Wealth plays an important role in restricting access to certain sports and those in which participation requires higher incomes tend to reflect less diversity,” he said. *“These sports, which require high levels of income for entry, are characterized by less racial and ethnic diversity in national and international competitions.”*

The Special Rapporteur also noted in his report some of the good practices and initiatives undertaken to prevent and tackle racism and promote acceptance and diversity within sports, especially the actions initiated by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Federation for International Football Association (FIFA), and several Government awareness raising campaigns as well as regional initiatives.

“Governments around the world should strengthen capacity to prevent and combat racism and discrimination in sports and take appropriate measures to harness the unique potential of sports to debunk racial superiority discourses, mobilize people and convey messages about equality and non-discrimination,” Mr. Ruteere stated.

See the full report: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Racism/A-69-340.pdf>

Source: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15247&LangID=E>