



## United States Mission to the OSCE

# **Statement on Supplemental Human Dimension Meeting on Combating Racism, Intolerance, and Discrimination in Society through Sport**

As prepared for distribution by Ambassador Ian Kelly  
to the Supplemental Human Dimension Meeting on Combating Racism,  
Intolerance, and Discrimination in Society through Sport, Vienna  
April 19, 2012

The United States appreciates the significant opportunities offered by this Supplemental Human Dimension Meeting (SHDM) and its related events to focus on the implementation of our OSCE commitments on tolerance. Today has particular significance for these discussions, as it also marks Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day.

In commemoration of Yom HaShoah, last night we hosted a viewing of the film *The Rescuers*, which focuses on the courage of diplomats who saved the lives of thousands of Jews during the Holocaust. When we commemorate the Holocaust, we often declare, "Never again!" And yet we are reminded all too often that anti-Semitism, as well as other types of prejudice and bigotry, thrives in different ways in our societies, manifested in its subtle forms as well as in tragic violence.

This SHDM offers an innovative look at tolerance through the medium of sports. Consider how past debates over boycotts and player protests have left their mark on the Olympic Games, shining a spotlight on anti-Semitism and apartheid. At the same time, sports have a unique potential to promote equality, tolerance, inclusion and social cohesion, due to their reach across society, from youth to political leaders. Such a focus is timely given the major sporting events of 2012 in the OSCE region, including the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) European Football Championship (Euro 2012) and the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics in London.

We look to this discussion of tolerance to underscore the importance of combating hate and related crimes and other incidents, an issue of critical importance for the United States. We commend ODIHR for facilitating the Civil Society Roundtable on Hate Crimes over these past two days, and we warmly welcome those civil society participants who, by vigilantly monitoring and reporting on hate crimes, hold governments accountable for their responses to those crimes. We applaud the NGOs that monitor crimes and incidents based on different forms of discrimination or intolerance, including anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia, and discrimination or intolerance against Roma, Muslims, Christians, and those of other religions, as well as intolerance and crimes against persons because of their disabilities, sexual orientation or gender identity.

As we discuss hate crimes occurring in the context of sporting events, we call for a comprehensive community response that incorporates sports organizations, fans, government,

law enforcement, and civil society. We look forward to learning about such promising new practices as team or fan penalties, media campaigns like ‘Show Racism the Red Card,’ and strengthened policing around sporting events.

The United States launched a campaign called “2011 Hours Against Hate,” at the February 17, 2011 OSCE Permanent Council meeting in Vienna. Now “2012 Hours Against Hate,” this virtual campaign uses social media to encourage youth to volunteer their time with someone who does not look like them, live like them, or pray like them. It has been adopted by government officials, mayors, and civil society all over the world and has been endorsed by the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Olympic Truce.

In the United States, a focus on anti-discrimination and diversity issues in the management of sports has been instrumental in curbing ethnic and gender biases in both the sports arena and throughout wider society. We are honored to host a Side Event tomorrow with the esteemed Daniel Rooney, our current Ambassador to Ireland. Ambassador Rooney was instrumental in the landmark rule that addressed diversity in sports management in our National Football League. We encourage all participants to join us for this special event.

At the 2011 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Prevention of Racism, Xenophobia and Hate Crimes through Educational and Awareness-Raising Initiatives, Advisor to the President of UEFA, Mr. William Gaillard, emphasized that one-third of UEFA soccer players are of African descent and that they are often the targets of racism, including the shocking example of ‘monkey chants’ at soccer events, and targets of hate crimes. Civil society representatives at the meeting called for a targeted effort to address racism and discrimination towards persons of African descent in soccer, including initiatives that could assist families whose children had experienced racism. The impact on children is highly relevant given the millions of young people across the OSCE region engage in sports as both participants and fans.

We support accessible initiatives that promote diversity, tolerance and inclusion through an emphasis on good sportsmanship and anti-bullying training. We applaud positive examples such as the British rugby player Ben Cohen who has condemned anti-gay bullying. We look forward to discussing how to advance social cohesion through sport and commend innovative programs such as Basketball Without Borders and Peace Players International which demonstrate how sport can bridge ethnic, racial, religious, and other community divisions.

We have dedicated foreign policy resources to sports diplomacy with the aim of bridging cultural gaps and increasing dialogue through sports. Sports diplomacy builds on Secretary Clinton’s vision of “smart power” diplomacy. Using the power of sport and its transcendent ability to bring people together, the U.S. State Department’s sports exchanges have become among the most popular in all of our people-to-people exchange programs. SportsUnited is the United States’ diplomatic outreach office charged with the mission of working with youth in discovering how success in athletics can be translated into the development of life skills and achievement in the classroom.

Sports play a wonderful role in our societies. They bring diverse people together in pursuit of a common goal. We celebrate our teams’ victories and mourn their losses. For players and fans, sports breed camaraderie; intolerance, bigotry, and racism tarnish the beauty of the game for all of us.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.