

Contribution of the International Olympic Committee

Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health

Questionnaire

“Sport and healthy lifestyles as contributing factors to the right to everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.”

1. In your view, what should UN member States be doing to encourage individuals to participate in sport and adopt healthy lifestyles? What is the extent of their responsibilities to their population in this area?

a) Sport, physical activity, and physical education have been recognized for many years and in numerous international instruments and initiatives as an important tool to achieve health, education and social development for all. The recent Declaration of the UN Summit on the post 2015 development agenda reiterated this in article 37:

Art 37 - *“Sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development. We recognize the growing contribution of sport to the realization of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and young people, individuals and communities as well as to **health**, education and social inclusion objectives.”.*

b) European Ministers of Health have also recognized the need for action by recently adopting a strategy to tackle physical inactivity in 53 WHO Member States for 2016-2025.¹

c) Research, existing policies and practices at national level have proved repeatedly the value of investing in sport and physical activity for healthier populations.

- Physical activity is the **third pillar of NCDs primary and secondary prevention**, with recognised impact on cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, hypertension, obesity, depression and osteoporosis².
- Member States of the World Health Organization (WHO) have committed to **reduce physical inactivity by 10%** by 2025.³
- In China, India, the U.K., the U.S., Russia and Brazil alone, the **cost of physical inactivity** is estimated to have been more than US\$ 218 billion in 2008 and is projected to reach US\$ 302 billion in direct costs by 2030⁴.
- If prevalence of obesity continues to grow on its current trajectory, **almost half of the world’s adult population** is projected to be **overweight or obese** by 2030⁵.

¹ *Physical activity strategy for the WHO European Region 2016-2025: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/about-us/governance/regional-committee-for-europe/65th-session/documentation/working-documents/eurrc659-physical-activity-strategy-for-the-who-european-region-20162025>.*

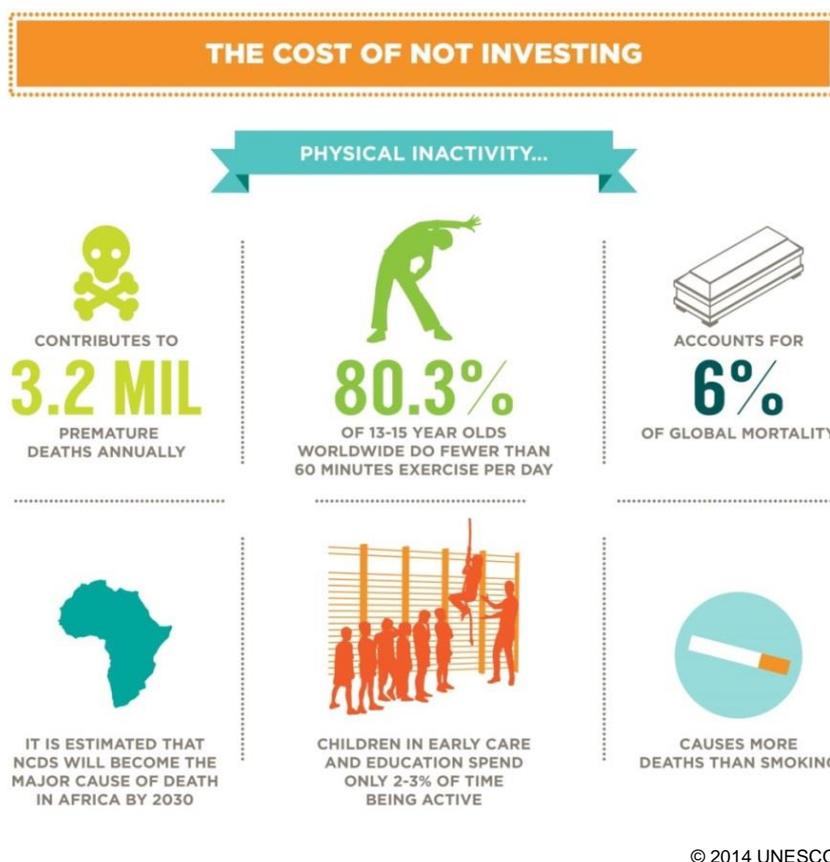
² *Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, WHO, 2004.*

³ *World Health Assembly, resolution 66.10, WHO, 2013.*

⁴ *Designed to Move, A Physical Activity Action Agenda – Executive Summary, Nike, Inc., 2012.*

d) Evidence-based research demonstrates that sport and physical activity can positively contribute to numerous health issues:

- Sport produces beneficial effects on **mental health**, enhances self-esteem, helps to manage stress and anxiety, and alleviates depression.
- Sport offers multiple avenues to address health challenges and promotes good **health for girls and women**. It can provide an important venue to share critical health information and education and a safe and neutral space where women can discuss sexual and reproductive health issues and strategies to address them.
- Sport can be a valuable **informational and educational platform** for health and development messages targeted to youth and adults alike.
- Sport can be an **effective way to reach out to people, especially youth**, and to encourage healthy lifestyle behaviours that will help to protect them against HIV and other diseases.
- Sport can help **reduce health-care costs and increase productivity**, key issues in emerging economies.



⁵ *Overcoming obesity: an initial economic analysis – Discussion paper, McKinsey Global Institute, McKinsey & Company, November 2014.*

Please see the attached document for further details ⁶.

e) The IOC, and its network of 205 National Olympic Committees in particular, along with International and National Sport Federations, have been promoting and supporting the implementation of these policies through its own activities and programmes that offer opportunities for sport for all and sport for health beyond elite sport athletes and Olympic Games themselves.

f) Member States have the responsibility to act on behalf of their population to provide opportunities and means to healthy lives and guarantee their right to health over the course of a lifetime.

g) Considering the crisis level that, among others, non-communicable diseases and childhood obesity have reached in many countries, it is paramount that governments take the lead in addressing them, failing which major medical, social and economic consequences will arise. A life-course approach to health is fundamental to optimize impact, and the benefits of sport and physical activity across the life-span fully align with it.

h) Beyond the right itself, health literacy including physical activity must be particularly promoted in school-age children and adolescents to ensure that healthy behaviors are adopted from early age and maintained across their life-span.

i) To successfully achieve results, sport and physical activity must be integrated into various policies which should systematically take health into account (a multi-stakeholders' approach). As such, it is critical that governments :

- integrate sport and physical activity into **primary care interventions** and train health professionals and caregivers accordingly. Provide further **guidance to parents and mothers** in particular before and during pregnancy on the benefits of healthy lifestyles and physical activity.
- consider removing barriers among **cultural norms and social restrictions** which prevent populations to access and practice sport adequately and safely, and shape physical activity behaviors for life.
- ensure that structured and unstructured sport and physical activity are promoted, accessible, and safe when elaborating or reviewing **urban and town planning, environmental and fiscal policies** at national and local level, both in urban and rural communities;
- provide **local play and recreation facilities** for children, from formal child-care settings to public spaces;
- facilitate **active transport** to work (e.g. cycling and walking) and other sport and physical activity strategies for the working population;
- ensure that **school policies** support the provision of opportunities and programmes for quality physical education and sport, and have the necessary staffing as well as safe and appropriate spaces and facilities to this end.
- guarantee that interventions particularly take into account **excluded and vulnerable sectors of the population** who have poor and/or unsafe access to sport and physical activity, such as girls and women, people with disabilities, or other disadvantaged communities.

⁶ *The Contribution of sport to the Post-2015 development agenda, International Olympic Committee, February 2015.*

j) A solid mechanism of monitoring policy development and implementation must be put in place.

k) Governments' collaboration with and support to non-state actors, private sector and civil society at large should be reinforced; sport-based organizations have a particular role to play in this mechanism.

2. Do you know of any State that has introduced legislation or policy in relation to sport and/or healthy lifestyles? If so, please provide a brief description and evaluation of the laws or policies adopted.

n/a

3. What are the major challenges and opportunities that arise in adopting a right-to-health approach to participation in sport and adoption of healthy lifestyles?

The major challenge for a State to adopt such an approach is to know where to start and how to form the necessary alliances within the State to develop this approach in a structured, coherent manner.

The opportunities are to offer the numerous, varied departments of a State the opportunity to work together to achieve mutually beneficial goals, both economically and socially, in creating a healthier and happier population.

4. What are the best ways that individuals can be encouraged to participate in sport and adopt healthy lifestyles by Member States? Please, provide and briefly describe any examples of "best practices" adopted in this respect.

Please see section h) under question 1)

5. Are there any targeted interventions that can be implemented to promote participation in sport and adoption of healthy lifestyles amongst populations who could face vulnerable situations, including women, children, and people with disabilities?

As indicated under question 1, section h, all policies and i guarantee that interventions particularly take into account excluded and vulnerable sectors of the population who have poor and/or unsafe access to sport and physical activity, such as girls and women, people with disabilities, or other disadvantaged communities. This can be realized through mainstreaming their specific needs into general interventions for the whole population and/or developing appropriate and targeted programmes which cater for their needs. Both approaches are often required to maximize impact and results.

6. Other than Member States, which other actors should be taking steps to encourage individuals to participate in sport and adopt healthy lifestyles? How can this be achieved? Please list any best practice examples that apply.

Promoting and adopting healthy lifestyles where physical activity and sport have a critical role to play, require a multi-stakeholder approach to maximize impact and positive outcomes. Various sectors of civil society, such as sports organizations and the sport business sector at large, which constitute millions of people, practitioners and professionals around the world, make the reality of sport every day, above and beyond or in collaboration with governments' interventions. As such, a stronger partnership with these sectors of civil society should be developed to ensure alignment, complementarity, accountability, and greater impact of healthy lifestyles policies and interventions.

Annexes