



IWG

International
Working Group on
Women and Sport

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President Dr. Kang Too Lee, ladies and gentlemen,

Please allow me to kindly thank TAFISA for the excellent co-operation with the IWG that has (as we say in sport) "kicked off" fantastically. TAFISA has shown an active interest in the issues of gender equality in sport, which is greatly valued by the IWG. I would also like to thank you for choosing to include women and sport as one of the themes of this congress. The inclusion of gender equality issues onto the formal agendas of meetings and congresses is a first crucial step towards enacting positive social change.

I have been asked to give you the basic framework of the current situation for women and sport. And especially in regard to leadership. It feels very natural to me to talk to you about this theme since I know that sport for all is a concept of an open and inclusive strategy by which everyone can participate: from young to old, regardless of sex, race, culture and economic conditions.

Before we look closer to the theme, I would like to say few words about the International Working Group on Women and Sport.

The Working Group is an umbrella network that provides leadership and co-ordination for the international women and sport movement. The group was established in 1994 as an independent co-ordinating body with a global network of about 5000 individuals. The IWG consists of representatives of key governmental and non-governmental organizations, academia, media and so on, who all work towards empowering women across the world with the aim of achieving full involvement of women in every aspect of sport.

Like TAFISA, the IWG also tries to reach all the corners of the world. In our network we have strong links, to the French, English and Spanish speaking world, and active members in Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania and in the Americas.

Along with ongoing efforts to make meaningful contributions to the advancement of the women and sport movement, our working group also organizes a quadrennial world conference on women and sport. The 6th IWG World Conference will be held in June 2014 in Helsinki, Finland.

Today, I would like to approach the issue of women and sport from three different perspectives: women and girls as participants in sport, women as leaders in sport and finally I would like to recommend you some tools for your future efforts in drafting policies and realising practises in your organisations.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let's start by looking at girls and women's participation in sport.

According to a Eurobarometer published by the European Union in 2010, 43 per cent of men devote time to physical activity once a week, whereas the same figure among women is only 37 per cent. Among the young, males are clearly more physically active than females.



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In reality, girls the world over have fewer opportunities for sport and also lower participation rates in sport and physical activity than boys. This fact signifies an early point of divergence in the opportunities between girls and boys from which the paths for girls and boys often go in different and unequal directions. This situation persists into adolescence and adulthood.

However, it is worth noting that large cultural differences exist in the involvement of women in physical activity from region to region. Culture, religion or ethnic identity can produce challenges for the engagement of girls and women in exercise and sports.

If we look at the rationale behind girls and women's participation in sport and physical activities, we can approach this issue from three perspectives: individual, health and wellbeing and societal perspective. These perspectives also highlight a variety of reasons why gender issues deserve a higher place on the agenda of the sporting world.

From the point of view of the individual, we can appreciate the importance that sport and physical activity has throughout the life stages of girls and women from early childhood to old age.

Sport and physical activities serve as important means for fostering self-knowledge, healthy body image and positive self-esteem. We should also always remember how much joy sports can bring to the everyday lives of girls and women.

From the point of view of health and wellbeing, sport and physical activity promote healthy lifestyles that support physical and mental wellbeing throughout a person's entire lifespan. In practical terms, for girls who participate in organized sporting activities, this nurturing environment can represent an excellent setting to receive education on important public health issues. For example, reproductive health or sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV-AIDS. I am sure that this audience here today is well aware of the benefits of exercise when it comes to its health benefits.

Physical activity and sport can also help combat obesity, a global epidemic that is increasingly affecting both the developed and the developing world. Obesity is known to contribute to a host of debilitating and costly diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, high-blood pressure and type 2 diabetes that are putting ever more pressure on increasing budget limited health systems. In fact, women suffer higher rates of obesity than their male counterparts. Osteoporosis is also of particular concern for women. The active promotion of sport and physical activity for women is a key component to combating osteoporosis as well as many other health risks and illnesses.

Now I turn to look at issues of empowerment and gender equality from a societal perspective.

Studies suggest that women's participation in sport and physical activity also contributes to more broad-based feelings of female empowerment. Involvement in sport and physical activity opens up a positive means for female self-identification, one that often serves to breakdown the limiting gender-based stereotypes.



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Thus, involvement in these often male-associated activities can establish new community roles and affiliations for female members of society. This in turn helps to challenge societal restrictions on female contributions to society. This mechanism for empowerment is also significant for marginalized members of societies. For example the physically and mentally disabled, ethnic or religious minorities, immigrants and refugees, and those of a different sexual orientation.

Here I would also like to mention that for many women across the world, there initially exists the need to just feel safe from gender-based violence and harassment when attending sporting events, training, competing and in the workplace.

Dear friends, while more women than ever before are participating in sport at the local, national and international levels — when it comes to decision-making and leadership in sport bodies and institutions, women are still significantly under-represented. One common issue that unfortunately always comes up in various statistics, research findings and meetings in the sporting world is that the higher the position of power the fewer women there are.

If we would like to quantitatively gauge the participation of women in sports leadership one way would be to consider the percentage of women serving on decision-making sport committees. In any case, determining the proportion of women in decision-making positions within sports committees internationally is a lofty undertaking. Unfortunately, I might also add, there is a real lack of comparable data regarding women in these positions and there is the need for further research on the topic from local, national and international perspectives.

This is one reason why IWG at its 2010 Sydney Conference unveiled the Sydney Scoreboard. The Sydney Scoreboard operates as a powerful online tool through which women in leadership roles within sport organisations can be tracked both nationally and internationally. The site provides an internationally accessible, interactive and real time means of tracking progress with regards to the boards of sport organizations. If we look at the data that Sydney Scoreboard has provided so far, we can see that the percentages of women as board directors varies from 5 per cent to 39 per cent. When we look at the figures we can see that the Northern European Countries tend to be at the top of the table. The highest figure of women as board directors is from Norway where there is a law that regulates gender quota, by prescribing a minimum gender representation in elected boards and committees in Norwegian sport.

In 1996 the IOC set specific targets for the percentage of women in decision-making positions, particularly in executive and legislative bodies. It is worth noting that in many countries NOCs are also responsible for Sport for All activities. NOCs, IFs, National Federations and other sporting bodies that belong to the Olympic Movement were instructed to aim to achieve at least 20 per cent in their structures by 2005.

Data for the IOC regarding the success of this target in its 2010 "Gender Equality and Leadership in Olympic Bodies" factsheet are presented here. The good news is that the number of women in these bodies has increased. The bad news is that they are still significantly under represented.



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Women in Sport Leadership - IOC Data 2010

	NOCs	IFs
% of Executive Committee who are women	17.6 %	18 %
% of candidates for the post of President who are female	7.1 %	7.8 %
% of candidates for the post of Secretary General who are female	12.6 %	16.7 %
Ratio of those organizations reporting increase in the number of women on Executive Board to those reporting a decrease since the last election	+ 31.3 % - 18.2 %	+ 20 % - 13.3 %
% of NOCs/IFs with a Women in Sport Commission or similar body	75 %	50 %
% of NOCs/IFs adopting a formal equity policy	55.7 %	62.5 %

One reason for this persistent gap between participation and leadership is that gender inequality has been allowed to linger in sport far longer than in many other fields. As Sue Tibballs, Chief Executive of the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation expressed, "In terms of gender equality, sport has simply been left behind." It is hard to imagine that the notion that a woman is just as capable as a man would inspire in this day and age much serious debate within most professions. However, when considering women's professional competence as coaches, referees, officials or commentators the case is remarkably different.

So, why is it important to have girls and women in leadership positions?

Gender equality is a fundamental right and an essential part of the democratic world. The realization of equality also has significant economic and social consequences. The empowerment of women increases a society's productivity and growth and promotes well-being.

From an organizational management perspective, increasing the number of women in decision making bodies makes for a more diverse and well-balanced management team. Research has also shown that groups made up of even proportions of men and women are the most innovative and that group performance goes up with increased female participation.

Thus increasing the proportion of women involved makes for a more diverse pool of talent and more innovative results.

This increased inclusion of women also sets a powerful precedent to the community at large and other organizations, which send the dual message that women can make valuable contributions to the sports movement and we can be effective leaders. Such women also serve as important role models and mentors to other women.

Young girls who are active in sport are more likely than their male counterparts to give up these beneficial activities as they progress through puberty and into adulthood. Those young women who do choose to remain active in sports and perhaps even pursue sports-related careers are in real need of targeted support. They



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need visible role models to help them make the professional progressions needed to reach the top of their chosen field and navigate the challenges of being both a leader in the field and also a family caregiver. The fact that women world-wide remain so clearly underrepresented in leadership positions within sport and physical activity demonstrates that support is acutely needed. This overall gap that exists between male and female participation levels in sports participation and leadership has necessitated a number of measures: the establishment of women and sport committees, the drafting of global and regional sport policies and declarations on women and sport, and last but not least the adequate monitoring of the effectiveness of these instruments.

If we initially look at the policies in place. I would like to go into further detail regarding the Brighton Declaration, which was the major outcome of the first World Conference Women and Sport in 1994. The conference specifically addressed the issue of how to accelerate the process of change that would redress the imbalances women face in their participation and involvement in sport.

The Declaration provides the principles that guide actions intended to increase the involvement of women in sport at all levels and in all functions and roles. The overriding aim of the Brighton Declaration is " . . . to develop a sporting culture that enables and values the full involvement of women in every aspect of sport."

The declaration identifies the lack of gender equality in the sphere of sport and provides the reasoning for the increased inclusion of women.

When considering the impact of the Brighton Declaration as a leadership tool, the degree to which it has been endorsed by intuitions and organizations is telling. One of the aims of IWG is to keep an ongoing record of Brighton Declaration Signatories. There are over 260 signatories and we welcome additional groups to follow in their footsteps. 2014 will mark 20 years since the issuing of the Brighton Declaration and over the next four years the IWG will be undertaking monitoring and evaluation of the developments in the international women and sports movement. The completion of this evaluation will coincide with our 2014 IWG World Conference on Women and Sport – this is also a good reason to come to Helsinki.

Following the Brighton Declaration a number of other important policy statements, declarations, international efforts and monitoring activities have also been issued and carried out along with the establishment of Women and Sports Committees. These include the establishment of the IOC Women and Sport Committee (1995) reaching the status of Commission in 2004 and the IPC Women in Sport Committee (2003).

Another valuable resource, based on the Brighton Declaration, is the legacy of the 3rd IWG World Conference on Women and Sport 2002, the Montreal Tool Kit. This tool kit contains a wealth of resources for increasing the participation and leadership opportunities for girls and women in sport and physical activity. As an example I would like to quote a small sample of what is written in section B, a gender equitable sport organisation.

"Bringing about a gender equitable organisation involves structural changes, a new set of values, norms and policies, new management practices, and changes in the attitudes of individuals towards equity. To help you respond to the challenge, the tool



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leads you through the assessment of potential strategies to determine where your organisation is at and what type of strategies are needed”.

The tool kit then moves on to give a template that helps you to determine how gender equitable your particular organization is and what priorities are most important for improving its gender equality.

The IPC Women in Sport Leadership Tool kit, released in October 2010, represents another practical resource for those looking to empower women and support women’s leadership potential in sports organizations, especially when it comes to the paralympic sports movement.

The IOCs Gender Equality and Leadership in Olympic Bodies report also gives eight recommendations on how to improve gender equality in Olympic bodies and international sport federations. As an example it is proposed that NOCs and IFs adopt a formal equity policy, following a process of review of the organisation’s statutes, and of the organisation’s culture and its impact on those working in the organisation and on policy delivery. Naturally, this recommendation can be implemented in other organisations, too.

In addition to these tools, I would like to draw your attention to few other methods that I think have great value in achieving gender equality in sport.

First, I would like to congratulate TAFISA for its decision to launch a survey to gather data on women leadership amongst TAFISA members. It is essential to know the starting point in order to follow and evaluate how policies and actions are affecting the outcomes.

It is good to bear in mind that action towards facilitating change takes place within the areas of education, facilities, access, training and mentoring, resource allocation and policy-making, and also with respect to research and data collection. These actions should take place at local, regional, national and international levels.

Mentoring and networking have very important roles to play within the process of bridging women’s participation in sport and their leadership potential. The Women’s International Leadership Development (WILD) has been one such mentoring initiative managed by the European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation (ENGSO) with European Women and Sport (EWS) as a supporting partner. In addition, many national sports organisations and some international sports federations have recently included mentoring in their programs of developing women’s leadership’s skills.

In conclusion, I would like to give you as recommendation six steps that could help you to facilitate change:

1. (Data collection and analysis:) First, gather data and statistics and analyze them in order to know the basis for your equality work
2. (Management’s commitment:) Second, for the change to take place the top management needs to be 100 per cent committed to the cause.
3. (Political will:) Third, organization’s policies and strategies need to support gender equality.
4. (Concrete programmes:) Fourth, develop concrete programmes to help girls and women’s participation at all levels.



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5. (Resources:) Fifth, allocate resources to these programmes, have a person responsible for equality work and make sure that organizations funds are equally divided between men and women.
6. (Monitoring and Evaluation:) Sixth, monitor and evaluate your progress and make changes based on them.

Last but not least, it's so very important to communicate your successes in the field of women and sport. Share this information with stakeholders and society at large so that they are well-aware of your work and can learn from your experiences. On behalf of IWG, I can underscore our commitment to share developments in women and sport with our network of about 5000 individuals. Please feel free to consider IWG's global network and communication tools as a means to disseminate information about your initiatives and triumphs and also learn about what is happening in other parts of the world.

Please also consider our 2014 World Conference on Women and Sport as a value opportunity to showcase your experiences and network with others interested in promoting gender equality and involved in the sphere of women and sport.

Today, at the end of this session, one significant step will be taken when TAFISA signs the Brighton Declaration. As I told you earlier, the signing of this document has resulted in many enhancements in the field of women and sport. On behalf of the IWG I would like to express how grateful and proud we are to have TAFISA as one of the Brighton Declaration signatories. We truly appreciate the commitment of TAFISA to the promotion of women and sport and gender equality.

Later on TAFISA and IWG will also sign a Memorandum of Understanding, which outlines the spirit and objectives of this co-operation and which also provides tools to make the most of it.

On behalf of the International Working Group on Women and Sport, I wish to thank you kindly for your attention and I hope to see you all in Helsinki in 2014.