

INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP ON WOMEN AND SPORT COMMUNIQUE

MONTREAL, 19 MAY 2002

More than 550 people from 97 countries attended the Third World Conference on Women and Sport, held in Montreal Canada, from 16-19 May 2002. The Conference was organised under the aegis of the International Working Group on Women and Sport, hosted by the Department of Canadian Heritage (Sport Canada) and facilitated by the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS).

The Conference identified barriers faced by women, but celebrated positive change for women in sport and physical activity over the last 4 years. Examples of the determination and achievements of outstanding female leaders from around the world demonstrated the power of women to overcome difficulties, promote change and increase opportunities.

Participants shared their experiences of the power of sport and physical activity in the development of individuals, communities and nations. They learned about using sport to promote women's development, cooperation, community leadership, international understanding and peace; and develop self-esteem and self confidence - the foundation for girls' and women's health and fulfilment. They discussed ways of ensuring that all women and girls have access to sport and physical activity, whatever their needs and abilities. They considered how they can help to change the culture and systems of sport towards inclusion, safety and respect; and how to influence governments, sport organisations the media and those financing sport in the media.

Every person attending the Conference received a Toolkit of materials and ideas for increasing women's and girls' opportunities in sport, for use in their countries and situations. Each participant was challenged to develop a personal action plan for change, demonstrating how they might work within their communities and countries to implement the 1994 Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport and the 1998 Windhoek Call for Action. Tennis Champion Billie Jean King told them: "We" is "I", not "them" - we can all make a difference.

The theme "Investing in Change" laid the basis for the Conference to call for legacy - sustainable infrastructure and resources for women's and girls' sport and physical activity. Participants encouraged cooperation between women and men, and investment by individuals, organisations and governments in education in order to create a legacy from the conference that will:

- Help women and girls overcome social and personal barriers by developing self esteem and self confidence;
- Train women teachers, officials, administrators and coaches and encourage them to progress to the highest level;
- Encourage female athletes to act as role models;

- Empower young women to become leaders and to act as mentors for their younger sisters;
- Cultivate a culture of respect and meet the needs of all women, whatever their background and ability;
- Eradicate sexual harassment and abuse in sport.

The Conference called for a sustainable infrastructure for women's and girls' sport and physical activity, including:

- Safe and supportive spaces for play and physical development;
- Quality Physical Education in schools for all children, to develop fundamental motor skills and abilities - the basis of lifelong participation in physical activity;
- Equal opportunity for competition and training;
- Sport and physical activity as health promotion, to develop awareness of the power of sport in avoiding risk behaviours like early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, inactivity and obesity; and in promoting the ability to choose positive lifestyles;
- Strong links between practice, policy and research, including research to provide evidence for advocacy and improved delivery of sport and physical activity programmes;
- Effective networks and communication between women working in all roles and levels in sport and physical activity;
- Strategic approaches to gender equity in sport and physical activity.

The 550 Conference participants requested the International Working Group on Women and Sport to address the following objectives during the next four year term, and to report back at the 4th International Conference on Women and Sport in Kumamoto Japan in 2006:

1. To recommend to the United Nations and to Conference participants that countries include sport and physical activity for women as a section of their reports to the monitoring group for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
2. To present an official report of the 2002 World Conference on Women and Sport to the 2004 meeting of the Ministers of Physical Education and Sport, to be held under the auspices of UNESCO (MINEPS IV);
3. To monitor progress against the principles of the Brighton Declaration and the Windhoek Call for Action, and to collect evidence of the use of sport in developing women, communities and nations;
4. To develop and extend the availability of resources for people working on women and sport across the world;
5. To record and evaluate examples of gender mainstreaming in sport and physical activity policy and provision;

6. To continue to monitor the effects of the World Crisis in Physical Education, and to promote evidence-based advocacy on the value of school physical education for girls and young women;
7. To support and encourage the work of the international organisations for women's sport and physical education and to encourage sustainable networks and structures for development of women and sport, including cross sectoral working between GOs and NGOs, NOCs and physical education organisations, at national and regional level;
8. To encourage active cooperation between health, education and gender equity agencies, at national and international level;
9. To work cooperatively with International Federations and the Olympic Movement;

To work proactively to encourage cultural and structural change among sports organisations, towards gender equity.