

REPORT:

# Online Youth Consultation on Preventing Violent Extremism Through Sport

20-21 January 2021



SPORTS

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**First Online Youth Consultation**  
on Preventing Violent Extremism  
Through Sport



## United Nations Global Programme on Security of Major Sporting Events, and Promotion of Sport and its Values as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism



### INTRODUCTION

Sports have historically played a significant role in the promotion of peace and development through the dissemination of positive values across societies and the creation of opportunities. Additionally, young people continue to affirm their leadership as key drivers of sustainable peace in identifying and addressing the triggers of violent extremism through their innovation and diversity in action and rationale. Further, the United Nations acknowledges the impact of young people through UNSCR 2535 (2020), among other resolutions, by calling upon Member States to improve the capacity-building and inclusion of youth in key peace processes.

It is in this context that UNAOC hosted the first Online *Youth Consultation on Preventing Violent Extremism Through Sport*, taking place within the framework of the **Global Programme on Security of Major Sporting Events, and Promotion of Sport and its Values as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism (“Global Programme”)**, an initiative led by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), in partnership with the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and the International Centre for Sport Security (ICSS), through its Save the Dream initiative. The first day of the Consultation was designed to seek the inputs and contributions of youth on developing a series of initiatives within the Global Programme that advance the role of sport in preventing violent extremism:

- Global Awareness Campaign, “Say No to Terrorism,” while promoting the use of sport and its values as a tool to prevent violent extremism
- Guide for Policymakers to promote the role of sports and its values in preventing violent extremism and radicalization
- Training Handbook and Application for organizers on how to leverage the organization of sporting events to prevent violent extremism by focusing on sport values

The second day of the Consultation aimed at strengthening the engagement and cooperation of youth and Member States in using sport to promote sustainable peace and development.

The forum was graced with the presence of 48 **young leaders** from **40 countries** and **5 continents**, along with **20 National Focal Points (NFPs)** on PVE nominated by **Member States** to represent their respective entities in the Global PVE NFP network, within the framework of the **UN Global Programme**.

## Day One: Advancing the Role of Sport in Preventing Violent Extremism

### Part I: Welcome and Introduction

**Moderator: Mr. Bram Van Haver,**  
*Project Management Specialist – Youth and Education*  
*United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)*

The event began with a brief overview of the Global Programme and the value of young people in promoting sustainable peace and development by Mr. Bram Van Haver, UNAOC.

This was followed by remarks from keynote speakers in the field of sport, violent extremism and youth leadership.

**Ms. Thandiwe Abdullah,**  
*Co-Founder of the BLM Youth Vanguard and organizer of Black Lives Matter, Los Angeles*

Ms. Abdullah took to the stage by first addressing the ways in which the term ‘violent extremist’ is often used by law enforcement to describe and categorize black activists. She stated that the racial profiling of young people as possible threats presents a huge challenge towards countering and preventing violent extremism, and only builds more resistance. She asserted that governments should focus on building a free and equitable society, and ensure the safety and security of everyone without prejudice.

**Ms. Honey Thaljeh,**  
*Corporate Communications Manager, FIFA, Founder of Palestinian Women National Football Team, and Save the Dream Ambassador*

Ms. Thaljeh spoke, through personal experience, about the impact of sport in preventing violent extremism, and how it provided her with the spirit of resilience and a sense of identity. Ms. Thaljeh stressed the value of sport in breaking barriers otherwise present due to gender, religious affiliation or cultural differences. This unity leads to a shared sense of identity and fosters social cohesion which is crucial in the fight against violent extremism. Alternatively, Honey acknowledged that sport has the potential to sow division during competition and that it is our shared responsibility to ensure that positivity in sport outshines negativity. She urged the young leaders to continue pursuing change within their capacities and to always step out of their comfort zones to unlock their full potential as future leaders.

**Ms. Nadia Nadim,**  
*an Afghan-Danish football player for Paris Saint-Germain and the Danish national team*

Ms. Nadim echoed the sentiments of Ms. Thaljeh on the significance of sport in preventing violent extremism, which she witnessed through her own experiences. She said that violent extremist groups have learnt to exploit and recruit alienated young people by providing them with a sense of identity and belonging. Therefore, sport can provide a better alternative to promoting inclusion, belonging and acceptance.

## Part II: Youth recommendations on the Global Programme's deliverables

The participants were divided into four groups, each focusing on one of the 4 deliverables of the Global Programme, which are: the Guide for Policymakers, Training Handbook, Global Awareness Campaign and Application. These were their recommendations:

### a) **Guide for Policymakers (facilitator: Ms. Manuela Brunero, Programme Officer, UNICRI)**

- Provide a **clear definition** of violent extremism and a categorization of different types.
- Include a section on the importance of **contextualizing violent extremism** to ensure that P/CVE policies are relevant and effective.
- Provide policymakers with **clear directions on how to include sport in their P/CVE policies/plans** and make them aware how powerful sport can be. Successful examples, including **country-specific case studies**, can definitely help. Case studies should be divided by region as well as by sport, and include a short evaluation section with challenges and **lessons learnt**.
- Include **recommendations for policymakers, easy to implement**, on how to create, monitor and evaluate sports-based P/CVE programmes and guarantee **their sustainability**.
- Add a chapter on the scientific framework that provides **evidence on the use of sport to prevent and counter violent extremism**.
- Incorporate information on how sport could also create divisions and violence, and **generate radicalization** (for example the use of **sport for recruitment**).
- Serve as an **interactive guide** and provide a link with the Global Programme's Training Handbook and Application.
- Indicate that governments should prioritize **funding for youth-led organizations** that focus on P/CVE, and youth development, in order to strengthen their impact and potential. They should also **ensure that proper infrastructure is developed and accessed** by (youth) communities.
- Assert the policymakers' potential to increase youth participation in policymaking by engaging with **youth sport councils** from various sport clubs, if existing. Policymakers could create spaces and platforms for youth sport councils' representatives to share their insights, local experiences and recommendations in the design of new policies at the regional or national level.
- Identify the economic opportunities that come with sport, as a strategy to **address the structural drivers** of violent extremism.

### b) **Application (facilitator: Mr. Bahruz Balayev, Head of Global Outreach, ICSS)**

The session sought to develop ideas on the design and content of an Application that helps the end-user in organizing sport-based P/CVE programmes within the context of major sporting events.

- Provide a **free-of-charge service**, that **doesn't require internet connection**, and incorporate the use of **short messages and phone calls** in order to engage users from different parts of the world, including communities without internet access.
- Adopt a **user-friendly interface that is more relatable to young people** by developing it as a digital networking community that allows them to perform actions such as commenting, messaging, liking and Q&A. This would provide the space for networking opportunities and exchange of ideas

among young people and organizations, and ultimately scale up the fight against violent extremism.

- Ensure **different languages** are made available on the Application, enhancing inclusion and participation from different parts of the world.
- Include a **step-by-step manual** and a **performance indicator** that improves user experience.
- **Store and share interventions/best practices** adopted by various coaches.
- **Provide educational materials** of sport-based P/CVE programmes such as videos, articles, case studies, etc.
- **Create (funding) opportunities for youth(-led) organizations** by making information about their projects available on their user profiles, hence making those accessible for organizations interested in funding or building partnerships.
- Include a **section on volunteering and job opportunities** in sport.
- **Allow the different users to share** their projects and experiences **on social networks through the Application**.
- Offer the option to **allow identification of geolocations** to provide information on violent extremism in specific locations, and also connect young people from the same location.
- **Send notifications** to users to keep them engaged and informed about sport for development and peace and P/CVE.
- Include **filters that eliminate disinformation and hate speech**.

c) **Training Handbook (facilitator: Ms. Dana Podmolikova, Project Management Specialist – Youth, UNAOC)**

- Build awareness on **“sport to prevent and counter violent extremism”** and how it can be achieved in its different forms.
- Exercise caution when using the term **“P/CVE”** while organizing sport-related activities as it could make people hesitant to engage due to the sensitivity of the term. **Sport-based P/CVE activities should focus on making connections through sport where the P/CVE aspect would only be complementary, without taking centre stage.**
- **Promote the engagement and incorporation of local community stakeholders** in designing sport-based P/CVE activities to ensure that the local needs and context are taken into consideration, including the use of **different kinds of sport**.
- Achieve sustainability within the local community by **engaging with local businesses**, and developing P/CVE activities in the local communities during the major sporting events.
- Take into account important **challenges** while organizing sport-based P/CVE activities within the framework of a major sporting event, such as political and culturally motivated tensions, potential language barriers and ultras who hinder the success of the activities.
- Improve the impact of **sport-based P/CVE activities on the lives of individuals by not focusing too much on the results**, but rather **on value education and on building social and personal skills**.
- Create **after-school sport-based P/CVE activities** that develop constructive dialogue among the younger generation. Engaging children from an early age is important within the long-term strategy of preventing and countering violent extremism. One of the examples highlighted was the application of martial arts training which would develop their self-defense strategies – protection is commonly used to lure new members in violent extremist groups - while training them on the values of respect, discipline and tolerance.

- Set up **sport-based mentorship programmes at community level** for vulnerable young people, with the long-term strategy of creating belonging and preventing radicalization.
- Put in place strategies and measures to ensure that **infrastructure** built during major sporting events continue to add value to the communities.
- **Communicate messages of peace and inclusion during major sporting events.** Introducing the white card for positive/fair play or fan engagement activities that encourage unity and social inclusion are some examples.
- Raise awareness on **the impact that sport clubs can have in their respective communities** and **incentivize bridges** between them and other sectors, such as social work. This would strengthen the role of sport in achieving sustainable development goals and addressing some of the drivers of violent extremism.
- Organize **intergenerational cooperation** to ensure success of major sporting events in preventing violent extremism, like the involvement of youth-led organizations in planning the event. This could be boosted with the introduction of a **Youth Ambassadors' network**.
- Call on organizers of sport-based P/CVE activities, within the framework of a major sporting event, to **measure the impact of their activities**, and enhance the capacities of all stakeholders involved.
- Recognize that **sport also engenders violence**, through hooliganism for example. The organizers should develop programmes that **counter those negatives**.

d) **Awareness Campaign (facilitator: Ms. Sereena O Karsou, Special Projects and Innovation Branch, UNOCT)**

- **Engage young role models, both within as outside the world of sport**, to make it easier for young people to identify themselves.
- **Include athletes that are somehow connected or have interests in the campaign's objectives, and not to a number of other (less relevant) campaigns, in order** to avoid loss of credibility in the messages.
- **Capitalize and build on the value of youth mobilization** to achieve greater success.
- **Engage with youth-led organizations** to assist in the dissemination of the campaign messages, including after the major sporting events have occurred, to ensure consistency and sustainability.
- Create **Youth Ambassadors/Influencers** networks and indicate the various opportunities and platforms to engage.
- Maximize the potential of **digital and social media**, like the use of applications such as Tiktok – which has grown in popularity.
- Work **alongside grassroots-organizations to ensure a wider reach of people**, acknowledging that some of the information may not be accessible to people without digital access.
- Take into account the burden of (digital) **illiteracy** and adopt strategies that would convey the messages to all groups of people.
- Value the importance and influence of **word of mouth**.
- Create **campaign materials and visuals** to make the information more identifiable, which includes flyers, posters and t-shirts.
- **Spread messages in public transport** by, for example, placing the athlete's advertisement on the side of a bus stop.
- Provide **messages that are short, clear, precise and contextualized, and build credibility and trust**.

- Be transparent on **who the messenger is**. People should, for example, know if it's a government campaign or a campaign organized by any other actor.
- Consider **organizing two different campaigns**, whereby one would target the public that lack information on violent extremism and raise awareness about P/CVE and terrorism, and another would target the vulnerable public where there are high numbers of recruitment by violent extremist groups.

## Day Two: Dialogue on Youth Participation in Decision-making Processes

**Moderator: Mr. Bram Van Haver,**  
*Project Management Specialist – Youth and Education*  
*United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)*

The second day of the Youth Consultation aimed to address the challenge of youth participation in decision and policy-making processes. It brought together the 48 youth participants and 20 National Focal Points representing their Member States within the Global Programme to discuss the ways in which the youth can be more involved in key processes, and the challenges of youth leadership in P/CVE.

### **Part III: Role of Governments in Promoting Youth Participation**

Mr. Bram Van Haver provided a brief introduction on the role of National Focal Points (NFPs) in the Global Programme and introduced the keynote speakers for the day who shared their best practices on youth-led participation in P/CVE within their respective country/region.

**Mr. Ibrahim Naeem** (NFP of Maldives), Director of National Counter-Terrorism Centre

Mr. Naeem described the state of violent extremism within Maldives, mainly facing hate speech and recruitment of young people on social media, and their all-of-society approach to address the issue. He stated that the guiding principles of the Maldives' National Action Plan (NAP) on P/CVE include the reviewing of policies by young people and involving them in developing P/CVE programmes. He echoed that engagement with youth is not a choice but a necessity if we want to successfully address push and pull factors. The National Counter-Terrorism Centre also engages with a Youth Council that includes young people from all over the Maldives, in which they share and exchange related plans and ideas through seminars and workshops.

**Ms. Satu Heikkinen** (NFP of Finland), Senior Ministerial Advisor at Ministry of Education of Finland

Ms. Satu Heikkinen discussed the risk of violent extremism in Finland as minimal, albeit growing. She stated that P/CVE is managed by the Ministry of the Interior, which works alongside the Ministry of Education and Culture, youth leaders, representatives from the sport sector and local civil society groups, in order to create, coordinate and implement the National Action Plan (NAP) on P/CVE (2019-2023). The Ministry of Education and Culture promotes sport by providing funding to municipalities and national organizations. In Finland there are 1.1 million members of sport organizations (out of a population of 5.5



million). The policy objective is to offer low threshold sport activities open to all age groups which promote the wellbeing of the population, including young people. Within the context of the National Action Plan (NAP) on P/CVE, it has been considering how to ethically use sport to promote diversity and respect for human rights by educating sports actors. Most recently, they developed the 'You are not alone' campaign which provides helpline service for people suffering from bullying or racial and sexual abuse in sport programmes. She asserted that sport could positively impact mental health and enhance the dynamics of exclusion amongst young people.

**Mr. Will Baldet**, Regional Prevent (CVE) Strategy Coordinator | Midlands | UK Senior Fellow, Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right: presenting the case of the city of Leicester

Mr. Baldet described Leicester as a high priority area for radicalization. A resurgence of far-right violent extremism has been experienced in recent years due to the changing political landscape. Another threat remains some of the religiously-motivated ideologies. He affirmed that sport is not going to tackle the roots of radicalization alone, but it complements other strategies by bringing young people together and building resilience. He reasserted the significant role that internet has played in the recruitment process by targeting isolated youth. Mr. Baldet suggested that developing solutions to reintegrate marginalized youth back into the community is paramount. He also emphasized that youth participation should not be about 'ticking the box' but genuinely seeking and valuing young people's contribution, and including them in all policy and decision-making processes. He referred to Rogert Hart's Ladder of young people's participation and urged institutions to develop projects initiated and directed by youth. For the success of these programmes, it is imperative that organizing groups create a safe space that lacks judgment and builds trust. He further reiterated that it is important that the right audience is listening so that if suggestions offered by the youth are not practical, they will provide critical feedback. Lastly, he expressed that most of the challenges that came from the local government were made easier through the youth council he worked with.

## Part IV: Dialogue with Member States: Recommendations on Strengthening Youth Participation in Decision-making Processes

### Facilitators:

- **Ms. Sereena O Karsou**, Special Projects and Innovation Branch (UNOCT)
- **Ms. Dana Podmolikova**, Project Management Specialist –Youth (UNAOC)
- **Mr. Bahruz Balayev**, Head of Global Outreach (ICSS)
- **Ms. Manuela Brunero**, Programme Officer (UNICRI)

### a) Recommendations for Policymakers and Member States

- Calling for the creation of **legislation that mandate multi-stakeholder cooperation**, including young people, while generating **transparency** in the design and implementation of P/CVE strategies, ensuring young people to contribute meaningfully.
- Urging institutions to adopt a **bottom-up approach** that encourages more interaction with youth-led organizations, leaders and policymakers in their P/CVE interventions. Developing **local**

**networks of government representatives and young civil society leaders** working on P/CVE could for example help to build stronger in-country collaborations and efforts.

- Cultivating environments that **encourage youth leadership** across all levels, while investing in **leadership development programmes** that advance and build the youth's leadership capacities.
- Adopt a **holistic youth approach**, addressing all aspects of youth development.
- Acknowledge **tokenism as a hindrance to youth inclusion**.
- Include **young leaders in marginalized areas** without access to some of the resources such as internet connectivity and technological devices, to ensure that everyone's voice is included.
- Generate **alliances with child protection systems** to encourage the participation of young people who, for various reasons, are excluded from the system.
- Call for more efforts to **include the youth in the COVID-19 recovery plans** as key players and not merely as beneficiaries.
- Streamline the participation and contribution of the youth in the achievement of **Agenda 2030**.

#### b) Recommendations for Youth Participation within the Global Programme

- **Create more spaces for the youth to tell their stories and engagements in P/CVE**, as it creates an opportunity to showcase the power of youth and facilitate their integration into decision-making processes.
  - **Creation of newsletter on the PCVE/Sport/Youth initiatives** and allow participation through content-sharing. Youth could contribute to the newsletter by informing about the impact of specific policies at the community level.
  - **Develop more platforms/events for deliberate youth-focused** conversations with the intention of applying the conclusions and developing follow-up discussions.
- **Request the NFPs to facilitate an overview of their National Action Plans (NAP) on P/CVE** to check what kind of youth-led actions are in place in terms of P/CVE at the local, regional and national level, and provide a report on the related findings.
- Encourage Member States to nominate NFPs, and request a **bilateral communication channel between the young leaders and NFPs** of their respective countries.
- Create **task forces** built around the participants' strengths (communication experts, athletes, P/CVE researchers) that provide technical support to the Global Programme.

### Part V: Next Steps

The Global Programme will:

- create an online space that fosters youth engagement and dialogue within the Programme, building a network of young leaders to collaborate in advancing the field of P/CVE through sport.
- develop ad-hoc Youth Task Forces that provide insights to specific programme outputs at different stages of development.
- organize regional youth fora to ensure that regional contexts and needs, from youth all over the world, are considered throughout the duration of the Global Programme.

## Testimonials from the Participants

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*“I would like to thank everyone involved in this project for organizing such a wonderful event. I tremendously enjoyed it. I have interacted with such inspiring people and I am beyond motivated to continue working on this project.”*

**Virag Turcsan, Hungary**

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*“I appreciate the opportunity to be part of this conversation and meeting amazing individuals from across the globe. This initiative meant a lot to me as an African, a Liberia who lived and experienced civil war at a young age and separation from my family. I found sports as a therapy which gave me a healing strength to find myself and the love of creating opportunity for others. I can't wait to see what the future holds; as I look forward to working with you all as well as the rest of the other leaders.”*

**Dacious Richardson, Liberia**

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*“It was really an honour to meet a group of other inspiring young leaders, learning what they are doing and getting more knowledge and ideas from them about sport and PVE. It was also great for me to share my knowledge and experience about sport and PVE with them and the event organisers.”*

**Agnes Atwijukire, Uganda**

*“It was a very creative and productive online event; I congratulate all organizers. I'm so looking forward to continuing cooperating in this field!”*

**Lorenta Kadriu, Kosovo**

*“It was a wonderful experience being part of this meaningful initiative. Looking forward for more of this towards community sensitization on PVE.”*

**LindaRose Akinyi, Kenya**



**Ayoub Ait Atman** @AyoubAitAtman4 · Jan 23

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It was truly inspiring to participate in the first Online Youth Consultation on #PVE Through Sports. Lots of learning during two days. Happy to be representing #Morocco 🇲🇴. Looking forward to more actions. Thanks to @UNAOC @UNICRI @UN\_OCT @icssArabic #SportinPVE



**Holly Jackman** @holly\_jackman · Jan 20

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Incredibly interesting afternoon taking part in the First Online Youth Consultation on Preventing Violent Extremism through Sport. Looking forward to tomorrow's discussion and gaining further insight from across the world 🌍 #Youth4PeaceThroughSport



**Brody McDonald** @brodycmcdonald · Jan 21

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Lots of learning today at the UN's consultation on youth and sport in #preventingviolentextremism. Excited to see the collaborations that come out of it. Thanks to @UNAOC @UN\_OCT @UNICRI @The\_ICSS for organizing and to each person who shared their story. #PVE #Sport4PVE



**Aya Badarneh** @BadarnehAya · Jan 20

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Inspiring stories and fruitful brainstorming discussions on the first day of the @UNAOC youth consultation! Thrilled to be representing Jordan and looking forward to day 2 🇲🇪 #SportinPVE @UN\_OCT @The\_ICSS @UNICRI



**Harry Savill** @HAJSavill · Jan 20

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Delighted to be taking part in this @UNAOC / @UN\_OCT consultation over the next two days as one of two reps from the UK. Some great discussion around the role sport can play in tackling extremism head on. 🙌 #SportPVE