

SAFE SPORT INTERNATIONAL – A briefing note, August 2014

1. An ad hoc group of experts on athlete welfare and protection met regularly between December 2013 and July 2014 to develop ideas for a global Safe Sport agency. This was first mooted in expert panel meetings for the IOC in 2006 and UNICEF in 2007.
2. Those participating represent entities of the children's NGOs (UNICEF, UNICEF UK, the NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit), high performance sport (the US Olympic Committee, the Hong Kong Sports Institute), development stakeholders (sport for development consultant for the Norwegian Olympic Committee), sport security (the International Centre for Sport Security), the charitable sector (Oak Foundation), advocacy organisations (Safe4Athletes), researcher-advocates in institutes of higher learning (Brunel University London, Winnipeg University, the Norwegian College of Sport Sciences), and sports medicine.
3. The expert panel came together in a closed meeting at Brunel University London from 23rd- 25th July 2014, funded by the Oak Foundation. Some of the key outcomes of those meetings included: agreement on the name of Safe Sport International for the new organisation, an outline Strategic Plan for SSI, and the 'Safe Sport International Declaration and Principles' (see below: currently being translated into at least nine other languages).
4. The next phase of development of SSI is to establish an organisational structure, to set up a web platform for the community of interest and to seek funds to move the initiative towards a formal launch some time towards the end of 2015.
5. A number of related developments are relevant to the formation of SSI. These include:
 - the new IOC Working Group addressing harassment and abuse prevention, for which Dr. Margo Mountjoy represents our expertise
 - comprehensive updating of the IOC Consensus Statement on Sexual Harassment and Abuse in late 2015 and its extension to cover other forms of abuse to athletes
 - the development of an IOC 2020 Strategy, using thematic clusters, to which we have already made representations via the Canadian Olympic Committee (through Gord Peterson)
 - the emerging IOC Youth Strategy on which we have already been consulted
 - the development and testing by 2016 of International Standards/Safeguards for Children in Sport, being coordinated via UNICEF UK and UK Sport: we hope these Safeguards will become the *de facto* child protection component of SSI's work into the future.

We respectfully invite your support for this initiative and your endorsement of the Declaration and Principles.

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SAFE SPORT INTERNATIONAL DECLARATION AND PRINCIPLES – *A platform for action*

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Safe Sport Declaration is issued in unanimity by the delegates at the Expert Panel on Safe Sport who met under the auspices of the Brunel International Research Network for Athlete Welfare.

2. PARTICIPANTS

The participants represent entities of high performance sport (the US Olympic Committee, the Hong Kong Sports Institute), the children's NGOs (UNICEF, UNICEF UK, the NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit), development stakeholders (the Norwegian Olympic Committee and representatives of Brunel and York St John universities), sport security (the International Centre for Sport Security), the charitable sector (Oak Foundation), advocacy organisations (Safe4Athletes), researcher-advocates in institutes of higher learning (Brunel University London, Winnipeg University and the Norwegian College of Sport Sciences), and sports medicine.

3. BACKGROUND

There has been a recent and rapid growth in awareness among sport federations, scientists and athlete advocates of the damaging personal and organisational impacts of violence and abuse to athletes. There is increasing recognition that violence threatens not only the ethical and social basis of sport but also the physical, emotional and mental health of the athlete. Rights violations of concern include: sexual, physical and emotional abuse, sexual harassment, bullying, hazing and many others that are in direct contravention of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Declaration of Human Rights. In recognition of this, a number of agencies, from both human rights and sport, have already developed harm prevention strategies and programmes in sport. These initiatives include practical measures – such as education and training, codes of practice and support for whistleblowers – and are based on a strong platform of values and principles.

Scientific and policy developments include:

- **Research evidence** about the types, prevalence and incidence of violence and abuse in sport has grown considerably over the past 20 years. Whilst much more data is needed, especially in relation to global cross-cultural comparisons, there is now a sufficient evidence base to underpin Safe Sport International.
- **Policy responses** to this evidence base include:
 - the IOC Sexual Harassment and Abuse Initiative (2007 Consensus Statement; online training; Youth Olympic Games education work);
 - the review of violence against children in sport by UNICEF and subsequent initiatives to rid sport of violence and abuse (2010);
 - the development and trial of a set of International Standards for Child Safeguarding in Sport, being tested by around 50+ organisations around the world from international to national to local levels (2013-2016);
 - the introduction of various respect-based programs and other safe sport initiatives addressing both adult and child athlete safety in many countries.
- **Growing demand for policies and procedures to secure sport as a place of safety for all.** These demands come from parents, athletes themselves, law makers, policy makers and a wide range of

sport organisations, from local to international levels, provoked by widespread media coverage of sexual and other violent and abusive behaviors in sport.

4. THEREFORE, THE MEETING PARTICIPANTS NOW DECLARE:

- i. Consistent with the commitment of sporting organisations to the International Safeguarding Standards trial, and of the IOC to its SHA programme, and of all other safe sport and violence prevention programmes;
- ii. that the sports movement should set up a mechanism to monitor and quality assure compliance by all NOCs and international federations with the Safe Sport International Principles (set out below);
- iii. that all organisations that organise sporting events should ensure that they establish criteria that require compliance with the Principles as a prerequisite for bidding to host major sport events;
- iv. recognising that, for these initiatives to be successful, the support of all stakeholders in sport is required, sport organisations should link safe sport to good governance within their networks as something to be adopted as policy by all and widely publicised;
- v. that there should be greater collaboration and cooperation between all sport organisations, institutions and agencies which support the human rights and welfare of all athletes;
- vi. that the promotion of safe sport in competitions and training, management and administration should, and must, serve the wider goal of supporting the existing international agendas of human rights and children's rights;
- vii. that sport should work with the UN and its agencies, especially UNICEF, and share in their work in order to foster safe sport culture and practices. Where they do not already exist, partnerships should be established at local levels between national sports organisations, UN country teams and civil society;
- viii. that a platform for networking should be established, thereby creating a place for exchanging and sharing ideas and good practices in the area of safe sport.

5. WE CONCLUDE BY

- a. Expressing our gratitude to Oak Foundation for the support and resources that have made this meeting possible and to the President of the International Olympic Committee for its work so far on the prevention of abuse and harassment in sport. Furthermore, we encourage all sport organisations to guarantee that safe sport standards are embedded in sport, thus ensuring the welfare and safety of all athletes;
- b. expressing our thanks to the Brunel International Research Network for Athlete Welfare and the Brunel Centre for Sport Health and Wellbeing for their welcome and hospitality.

PRINCIPLES

These principles apply but are not limited to past, present and future athletes, from all ages, abilities, social backgrounds and identities.

1. That the welfare, safety and rights of all athletes is the central consideration in the administration and delivery of sport
2. That all sport organisations work together with appropriate partners to prevent and respond to violence against athletes
3. That sport organisations establish and disseminate relevant codes of ethics and conduct that will help prevent breaches of safe sport
4. That all members of the athlete's entourage including officials, support staff and sports coaches, leaders and instructors undergo appropriate education and training about safe practices as a condition of their qualification to operate, including the adoption of empowerment-based coaching styles
5. That all members of the athlete's entourage including officials, support staff and sports coaches, leaders and instructors undergo appropriate background or criminal record checks and provide evidence of these to those responsible for hiring or recruitment
6. That athletes be educated and informed about their rights to be safeguarded and how to report any concerns they may have about their own or others' safety
7. That reports of violence, and/or other actions or practices by anyone in sport that compromise the safety of the athlete, be treated respectfully and investigated and acted upon in a timely manner by appropriate authorities
8. That individuals subject to complaints or allegations be offered due process with fair and transparent grievance and disciplinary systems, and with clear suspension, sanctions and reinstatement procedures
9. That appropriate multi-mode technology and communications media be used to supplement support for athletes or anyone else wishing to make and pursue a referral about a suspected breach of safe sport
10. That all breaches of safe sport are recorded and managed systematically and the data used to research, evaluate and enhance safe practice

'Safe sport – free from violence'

London, UK

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