

UN envoy welcomes meeting between Israeli and Palestinian Olympic committees



Wilfried Lemke, Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace

21 January 2011 – The United Nations special envoy on sport has welcomed a meeting between representatives of the Israeli and Palestinian Olympic committees, who met to discuss issues such as the free movement of both Israeli and Palestinian athletes, coaches, officials and sport material.

Wilfried Lemke, the Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace, said yesterday’s meeting in Lausanne, Switzerland, was “held in a very constructive and cooperative spirit.”

The meeting, held under the auspices of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), was an example of how sport can bridge divides and be used as a tool for initiating dialogue between two sides, he said.

“It is a very positive development to see these two sides coming together in the search for common ground on sport-related issues.

“I fully support this initiative and strongly encourage the parties to advance their discussions in this spirit of constructive cooperation. During my forthcoming mission to the region, I will certainly seek wider support for this initiative,” said Mr. Lemke, who will travel to the region next month.

The issue of supporting the development of Palestinian sport was also discussed at length and the IOC agreed to provide expert advice on developing a Palestinian sports development strategy, while the Israeli Olympic Committee agreed to offer training opportunities to Palestinian athletes.

“With this initiative, we see once more how sport in a pragmatic and apolitical way can succeed where other more traditional means prove unsuccessful. Sport can provide a neutral ground for sowing the seeds of progress,” added Mr. Lemke.

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