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UN envoy on sport for peace praises ‘exemplary’ Summer Olympics



Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace Wilfried Lemke. Photo: UNOSDP/K&W Bringmeier

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The United Nations envoy on sport for peace today lauded the London 2012 Olympic Games for their remarkable displays of athletic achievement, as well as for paving the road for future successes in promoting social change in a range of areas, from gender equality to peace building.

“I wish to congratulate the organizers, athletes, spectators and even more so the many volunteers whose remarkable efforts and support have been exemplary from start to finish,” the Secretary-

General's Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace, Wilfried Lemke, said in a [news release](#).

“There were a number of notable occasions and initiatives before and during these 17 days of competition that contributed to the legacy that these Games will have in the long run,” he added.

Mr. Lemke pointed to the historic inclusion of female athletes in all sporting delegations, including Saudi Arabia, noting that bridging the gender gap would “help change mentalities” and was “a very encouraging step in the fight for gender equality and women’s empowerment in and through sport.”

According to the International Olympic Committee, Saudi Arabia sent two female athletes – Wodjan Ali Seraj Abdulrahim Shahrkhani, who competed in judo, and Sarah Attar, who competed in athletics – to the London Games. The 2012 edition of the Summer Olympics also broke the gender barrier with every sporting event featuring both male and female competitions.

Turning to the Game’s numerous sporting successes, Mr. Lemke also celebrated the vast reduction in reports of doping among Olympic athletes while also applauding the demonstrations of dialogue and friendship on display throughout the two-week event.

At the same time, he noted that while the global call for a cessation of hostilities around the world had not gone entirely heeded, it still had had a resounding effect on the Games themselves.

“Even though a full observance of the Olympic Truce, meaning a cessation of hostilities during the Games, was not achieved, its spirit was definitely brought to life by a vast number of peace building and conflict prevention initiatives carried out worldwide, as well as by the exemplary behaviour shown by athletes, spectators and volunteers,” Mr. Lemke said.

In 2011, the 193 UN Member States co-sponsored a General Assembly resolution calling for the observance of an Olympic Truce and exhorting the cessation of all conflicts during the sports event. The resolution for this year’s Games was the first time that all 193 UN Member States co-sponsored it and passed it unanimously

The envoy’s office also noted that the Games provided the UN system with a global platform to promote numerous objectives, with various UN agencies taking part in awareness-raising campaigns and community programmes, as well as disease surveillance and environmental-protection initiatives.

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