



With breaking stories and
newswire products from

UN NEWS CENTRE



Secretary-General calls on countries to follow through with Olympic Truce



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (right) and Foreign Secretary William Hague of the UK at the Olympic Truce event at Carlton Gardens in London. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

27 July 2012 –

[Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon today urged countries to follow through with the Olympic Truce, and highlighted the role of sport in promoting peace, dialogue and development.

“If people and nations can set aside their differences, if they can place harmony over hostility, if they can do it for one day, or for one event, they can do it forever,” Mr. Ban said in his [remarks](#) at an event on the Olympic Truce and Sport for Social Change in London.

“That is the message of the Olympic Truce. That is the dream on which the United Nations is built, and the goal of our daily work,” he added.

Based on the ancient Greek tradition whereby athletes, artists, their relatives and pilgrims could travel safely to the Olympic Games and afterwards return home safely, the Olympic Truce called for the cessation of all conflicts during the sports event.

The modern-day version of the Truce has been promoted annually through a General Assembly resolution since 1993, and it was extended to the Paralympic Games for disabled athletes in 2006.

The resolution for this year’s Games was the first time that all 193 UN Member States co-sponsored it and passed it unanimously. Member States exhorted nations to observe the Olympic Truce individually and collectively, starting with the opening of the XXX Olympiad on 27 July and ending with the closing of the XIV Paralympic Games, which start in late August and end on 9 September.

The resolution calls on Member States “to cooperate with the International Olympic Committee and the International Paralympic Committee in their efforts to use sport as a tool to promote peace, dialogue and reconciliation in areas of conflict during and beyond the Olympic and Paralympic Games period.”

“The Truce may sound like something from the distant past that has no place in our times,” Mr. Ban said. “It may seem naive to think that hardened fighters and their patrons will listen, but relevant it is, and try we must.”

Mr. Ban said he was particularly concerned with the situation in Syria and the escalating violence in the city of Aleppo, and urged the Syrian Government to halt their offensive. “The violence from both sides must stop for the sake of the suffering civilians of Syria,” he said.

In addition, the UN chief emphasized that the Olympics should remind nations of the power of sport and physical activity as an investment in better health, education and skills, as well as a way to build inclusive and tolerant societies.

“We often take sport, play and leisure for granted, yet millions of people around the world do not have access to sports, or are actively denied their right to participate,” Mr. Ban said. “I call on all Governments and sport organizations to provide opportunities for sport, physical activity and play. This is not a luxury. It is an investment in better health, education and skills for coming generations – critical for building inclusive societies grounded in mutual tolerance and respect.”

He added, “When you see the magic that a ball can create among children in a shantytown or refugee camp, you see potential that we must harness.”

Yesterday, Mr. Ban participated in the Olympic Torch relay in Central London. He described the experience as “an extraordinary honour” and praised the United Kingdom for its organization of the event, as well as its own efforts to “give life to the Truce with social and development projects at home and abroad.”

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[Secretary-General to take part in London Olympics torch run](#)