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Korean soccer ace joins UN campaign in fight against HIV/AIDS



Korean footballer Myung-Bo Hon (left) with UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé

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The United Nations has added a new player to its star-studded roster fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS, Korean soccer icon Myung-Bo Hong, whose defensive prowess will now be used to help block further infections by raising awareness among young people worldwide.

“As one of the greatest Asian football players of all time, Myung-Bo Hong will be a compelling advocate on HIV prevention for young people and football fans worldwide,” [said](#) Michel Sidibé, UNAIDS Executive Director, during today’s appointment ceremony.

“I am honoured UNAIDS will work with such an inspiring athlete to disseminate vital messages about HIV to young people,” he added.

As a UNAIDS Goodwill Ambassador, Myung-Bo Hong is expected to raise awareness on HIV prevention among young people and fight the debilitating effects of stigma and discrimination

surrounding the disease, placing particular emphasis on his native Republic of Korea and across Asia.

“People living with HIV are people like you and me,” Mr. Hong said. “They have rights and should not be discriminated against. I am delighted to be working with UNAIDS to use sport to help bring an end to AIDS.”

The 42-year-old former Korean international played in four consecutive World Cups, from 1990 to 2002, and is currently managing the Republic of Korea’s Olympic soccer team.

Among his many accolades, Myung-Bo Hong became the first Asian soccer star to receive the World Cup Bronze Ball in 2002. He was also selected as one of the 125 greatest living players in the world by Brazilian soccer legend Pelé.

Highlighting the need for accelerated efforts to ensure dramatic reductions on new HIV infections, Byeongleul Jun, the Director of the Korean Centre for Disease Control and Deputy Minister of Health and Welfare of the Republic of Korea, celebrated Mr. Hong’s appointment.

“The involvement of a sporting hero as great as Myung-Bo Hong can greatly advance this important agenda and make a difference in the AIDS response around the world,” he said.

There are more than five million young people living with HIV and every day 2,400 young people are newly infected with the virus. Although young people are increasingly learning how to protect themselves, only one-third of them have accurate and comprehensive knowledge of how to protect themselves from the disease.

Mr. Hong joins an array of prominent UNAIDS Goodwill Ambassadors such as the recently-inducted Brazilian soccer star Ronaldinho. Other artists and athletes who have added their names and skills to UN causes include Academy Award-nominated actress Naomi Watts, singer Annie Lennox and soccer star Michael Ballack.

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