

GLOBAL AMBASSADORS SPORTS FOR DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

On behalf of: Michel Sidibé,
Executive Director of UNAIDS
30 January 2014
Trusteeship Chamber Council, United Nations
Headquarters, New York
**Global Ambassadors Sports for
Development Summit**

SPEECH

On behalf of: Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS

Date: 30 January 2014

Place: Trusteeship Chamber Council, United Nations Headquarters, New York

Occasion: Global Ambassadors Sports for Development Summit

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First, allow me to recognize the leadership and commitment of Jack Brewer and the impressive participation from the leading sports stars you have assembled here today. This is an unprecedented meeting at the United Nations that demonstrates how sports has a unique potential to overcoming the barriers between borders and above politics to be a force for youth empowerment, health and development. That we are here today with some of the NFL's leading players like Sidney Rice on the eve of the Super Bowl gives today's Summit even more gravitas, and makes the presence of superstars even more inspiring.

As a former football player, I am passionate about the potential of sport to change lives and transform society. Not just among those who play, but for everyone who appreciates the excitement of competition and the beauty of human excellence.

Next week the world's eyes will turn to the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi. This year's Winter Games have already stimulated a global conversation on ending stigma and discrimination for LGBT people. More broadly, it underscores the opportunity for the Olympics and other global events like the World Cup to advance bold ideas like ending the AIDS epidemic that will change the world for millions of people around the world.

Sports is the great equalizer of humankind—uniting rich and poor, young and old, majority and marginalized on a level playing field. The capacity of sports to reach and inspire people in society who can be difficult to reach—rural and urban poor, migrants, out-of-school youth and other people at risk—is unique and profound.

As we have heard from the testimonies today, sport is a powerful global messenger and convening agent. Sports leagues and matches bring communities together, providing an ideal space for AIDS awareness campaigns to reach large numbers of people. Athletes can amplify messages to fight stigma and discrimination and promote inclusion.

One of the reasons UNAIDS is advancing our 'Protect the Goal Campaign' at the FIFA 2014 World Cup in Brazil is that young people are still at high risk for HIV. Globally, an estimated 4.6 million young people are living with HIV. Each day, about 2300 young people are newly infected with HIV. Many young people living with HIV do not have access to life-saving treatment and at least half do not know their HIV status. In many countries, young people are prevented from accessing sexual and reproductive health and rights services, including

HIV testing and condoms, due to age-related restrictions. HIV treatment coverage and adherence rates are worse among children and adolescents than for adults. We cannot afford to leave the next generation vulnerable and if we are to reach the millions of young people at risk for HIV, we must leverage the power of sport.

During this weekend's Super Bowl, we will see first-hand how playing or even just watching sports is a powerful motivator for young people to lead healthy, active lives. Sport is a powerful tool for advocacy, including sports stars as role models for promoting healthy lifestyles. Young people who play sports have trusting relationships with their coaches and their team-mates, creating a space to openly discuss important issues like HIV and safe sexual behavior. More than any other activity or social phenomenon, sport empowers young people to take charge of their personal lives and undertake leadership roles among their peers and in their communities.

For these reasons, I would like to highlight the important role of Ndaba and Kweku Mandela, who have generously donated their time to serve as spokespersons of UNAIDS 'Protect the Goal' Campaign in the lead-up to this year's World Cup. They are not only creating a powerful bridge, uniting the campaign that started at Soccer City in Soweto, South Africa to the launch of this year's World Cup in Salvador, Brazil. But Ndaba and Kweku Mandela are also carrying forward the profound legacy of their grandfather Nelson Mandela, who was one of the first global icons to use his passion for sport as a vehicle to equip and empower young people in the AIDS response. We forever remain in his debt.

Finally, I would like to encourage all of you here today to use your voices and your visibility to advance bold, ambitious goals for health, development and youth empowerment. Ending AIDS is one that is close to my heart, and one that I know is within our reach. But I am convinced that the world will only reach this and other big goals if all of you – the world's leading sports icons – are leading the charge.

Thank you.

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UNAIDS

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners to maximize results for the AIDS response. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.