

Good afternoon everyone, in the room and online!

I am sorry I am not with you today in Strasbourg, but I followed this second Forum on Sport and Human Rights with real interest.

It is not my ambition to summarise all the enriching exchanges. It has been done by the rapporteurs. I noted the message that sport cannot, and can no longer, be politically neutral, especially not when it comes to defending universal rights. The political neutrality of sport, the specificity of sport or its autonomy cannot justify ignoring the fundamental rights of individuals, whether they are athletes or journalists. I also noted the intervention of several speakers who recalled that human rights are not only fundamental rights to be respected but also a question of global governance of sport, in which athletes must also be associated.

I was particularly concerned by the intervention of the athlete Mhairi Carmen MACLENNAN, not only when she testified about her denunciations of abusers in sport but also when she indicated that if she had to do it again, she doubts she would do it again...

The current threats to media pluralism were also raised as well as the need to strengthen the independence of journalists, their plurality, the gender equality representation and the support to investigative journalism. Some speakers also recalled that the media still privilege men's sport and that when women's sport is covered, it is still often commented on the basis of gender stereotypes, I would say "clichés". On a personal note, if I may say so, I think that the few recent progress in the recognition of women's sport and women athletes should not be the tree that hides the forest. The fact that we are still commenting on the success of a women's cycling race or that a woman is refereeing a football World Cup match shows that there is still a long way to go.

The topic of combating hate speech in sport has demonstrated the emergence of a worrying phenomenon, which is even truer on social networks. And of course, the main victims are often women and minority groups. The importance of raising awareness of the rights of victims and standing on their side was also recommended. The "Combating hate speech in sport" project launched this year, conducted by the Council of Europe, is certainly more than topical.

In his introduction, the Director of Anti-Discrimination, Mr Schokkenbroek, wished us an interesting conference; I think I can conclude by saying that this was the case, and I thank all those who made this conference a real success. Sport is special in that it is not only a physical and social activity, but it can also be a powerful agent of change for our societies. And maybe through sport we can also advance human rights, LGBT rights and gender identities, so that they remain universal, for all and everywhere, and not a right only available to the privileged and a new geopolitical divide. To conclude, I would say to the speakers and listeners that when it comes to promoting human rights in sport, you will always find EPAS at your side, and I have taken note of some various requests asking for example EPAS to start raising awareness among athletes of all their rights or to consider possible recommendations on freedom of speech in sport including possibly hate speech and continue to promote dialogue between all stakeholders.

Thank you / Merci