



Side Event Concept Note

Conference of States Parties to the CRPD (COSP)

Sport as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development:

Innovative Financing and International Cooperation in Action

12 June 2025 – 3:00 pm – 4:15 pm, CR 12, United Nations Headquarters

Overview

In a world increasingly shaped by complex social and economic challenges, **sport is emerging not only as a universal language but also as a transformative tool** for inclusion, empowerment, and development. Sport has long been recognized not only as a leisure activity, but as a transformative agent for inclusive development, resilience, and peace.

At the intersection of international cooperation and social innovation, the Permanent Missions of Italy, Albania, the Dominican Republic and Lebanon are proud to invite you to this side event at the COSP 2025, aimed at exploring **how sport can serve as a powerful vector for sustainable development**, particularly for persons with disabilities.

The 2022 Report of the UN Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace highlights “innovation and adaptations undertaken to apply sport for development and peace,” citing the work of **Progetto Filippide** — *a longstanding Italian initiative that promotes sport for individuals with autism and cognitive disabilities* — as a key example. The report underscores that, “with sufficient investment and targeted approaches, sport can also play a catalytic role in helping countries address rising poverty rates and growing inequality,” offering both immediate and lasting societal benefits.

The 2024 Report of the UN Secretary-General, notes that **important disparities remain**, as some experts have called for increased investment in expanding opportunities for individuals with disabilities to engage in sports and physical activity. Key obstacles to participation include inadequate accessibility of sports facilities, limited availability of appropriate equipment, societal biases and discrimination, insufficient resources, a shortage of properly trained personnel, low awareness of the needs and interests of people with disabilities, educational shortcomings, restricted opportunities for involvement, and concerns related to health and safety.

Rooted in Article 30 of the CRPD, which enshrines the right of persons with disabilities to participate in cultural life, recreation, and sport, **this event will shine a light on real-world solutions that address both inclusion and financial sustainability**. The UN Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace—recently updated—reaffirms the value of cross-sector partnerships and provides a roadmap for integrating sport across development policies.

The side event will delve into the tangible impact of such cooperation through a number of initiatives, including the inclusion of free sports programmes in the Municipality of Rome’s budget, inspired by Progetto Filippide, and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Progetto Filippide and the Government of Albania to establish inclusive sports centers in Tirana and Shkodra.

Anchored in the shared belief that no one should be left behind, the discussion will explore how innovative financing mechanisms, including corporate social responsibility (CSR) and public-private partnerships, can bridge gaps in access and opportunity—particularly in developing countries. The goal is not only to promote sport as a right, but as a sustainable solution to inequality, marginalization, and fragmentation in society.

Through this event, Italy, Albania the Dominican Republic and Lebanon reaffirm their commitment to advancing international cooperation in sport, and to promoting inclusive, resilient communities built on solidarity, respect, and shared opportunity.

Objectives

- To present innovative financing systems that support sustainable, inclusive sport programs in line with the CRPD.
- To showcase successful models of international cooperation, including the Italy-Albania partnership and the role of Progetto Filippide.
- To promote dialogue on integrating sport into broader development strategies, including the UN Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace.

Key Themes

- Sport for Inclusion and Dignity
- Implementation of Article 30 of the CRPD: The right of persons with disabilities to participate in cultural life, recreation, leisure, and sport
- Innovative Financing for Grassroots Access

Expected Outcomes

- I. Concrete policy recommendations for integrating sport into national development and inclusion strategies.
- II. Strengthened multilateral partnerships aimed at expanding access to sport for persons with disabilities globally.
- III. A renewed commitment to sustainable financing models that ensure no one is left behind, especially in developing regions.