

International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime

New York, 9 December 2022

PRESS RELEASE

(9 December 2022) Today in New York the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect held an event to mark the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime, as established by General Assembly resolution 69/323 of 29 September 2015.

This year's event was dedicated to the role of sport in countering hate speech and championing the prevention of atrocity crimes.

The event included the launch of the Plan of Action to Counter Hate Speech through Engagement with Sports, the GAME PLAN, developed by the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect in collaboration with the Eradicate Hate Global Summit. The document provides recommendations of actions to identify and combat hate speech and promote positive messages through outreach initiatives, identification of success stories, and comprehensive training. The GAME PLAN will be shared with sport leagues and athletes around the world.

The President of the United Nations General Assembly, **Mr. Csaba Kőrösi**, opened the event underlining that "this Day was born out of the General Assembly's desire to ensure that never again would a person face the horror of genocide". **Mr. Csaba Kőrösi** added that "governments have the primary responsibility to prevent genocide but advocating for the world's most vulnerable is our collective responsibility". He also stressed the important role of sports to combat hate online and offline, recalling that "athletes are amongst the most influential people in the world".

In his message for the International Day, the UN Secretary-General **Mr. Antonio Guterres** highlighted that "hate speech is one of the most common signs of atrocity crimes". Welcoming the launch of the GAME PLAN to support efforts to "address and counter incitement to violence, responding to warning signs to take early action" to prevent atrocity crimes including genocide, **Mr. Antonio Guterres** urged the "widest possible dissemination and implementation" of this document. He also called on every Member State to "take concrete steps to protect communities at risk, including minorities, and address discrimination and persecution".

Mr. Earle Courtenay Rattray, UN Chef de Cabinet, who represented the Secretary-General at the event, emphasized that "preventing genocide requires constant vigilance and commitment to act by all, including Governments, international and regional organizations, as well as civil society, the media, and other important stakeholders", and noted that "by engaging with the sport community, we are one step closer to a world free from genocide and other atrocities".

Ms. Alice Wairimu Nderitu, Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, in her opening remarks stated that "history has taught us the dangers of hate speech and its impact if left unchallenged", stressing that "by taking concrete steps towards prevention, we can live up to the promise of this Day and of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,

adopted 74 years ago”. **Ms. Alice Wairimu Nderitu** acknowledged the GAME PLAN as an important document which highlights sports as a tool to counter hate speech and prevent atrocity crimes.

The opening was followed by personal stories shared by **Ms. Michele Rosenthal**, Co-Chair of the Sports Working Group, Eradicate Hate Global Summit, and by **Mr. Raymond Whitfield**, 5/14 Survivor, who provided their powerful testimonies on survival from hate crimes and resilience. **Ms. Michele Rosenthal** recalled the lessons of respect and understanding left by her two brothers, Cecil and David Rosenthal, who were among those killed on 27 October 2018 at the Tree of Life synagogue. “We have the opportunity to carry that lesson forward in combating hate”, said Ms. Michele Rosenthal. Highlighting the important role of athletes, sports teams and leagues in combating hate speech and incitement to violence, **Mr. Raymond Whitfield**, who lost his mother in a racially motivated attack in Buffalo on 14 May 2022, noted that “your voice matters, perhaps more than you can know”.

During her keynote speech, **Ms. Laura Ellsworth**, Co-Chair of the Eradicate Hate Global Summit, emphasized that the GAME PLAN “provides a menu of resources and practices that fans, teams, leagues and corporate partners can deploy in their own operations and in the communities in which they live and work, not after the tragedies, but to create an ongoing and incessant global culture that visibly and actively says no to hate in all of its forms”.

The panel discussion on the role of sports in atrocity prevention gathered representatives of various sports organizations: **Ms. Anna Isaacson**, Senior Vice President, Social Responsibility, National Football League, **Mr. Rishi Jain**, Senior Manager, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Liverpool Football Club, **Ms. Rebekah Splaine Salwasser**, Executive Director, Boston Red Sox Foundation, **Mr. Oren Segal**, Vice President, Center on Extremism, Anti-Defamation League, **Ms. Christie Joseph**, Senior Vice President, People and Business Administration, Pegula Sports and Entertainment, and **Mr. Pete Stuart**, Senior Director, Social Responsibility, NASCAR. The panelists agreed on the value of sports as a catalyst against hate and incitement to violence and recognized the need to use that collective voice to lead and inspire social change towards prevention efforts. They also expressed strong commitment to implementing the GAME PLAN. In addition to these sports leagues, the Pittsburgh Penguins, Major League Baseball, National Hockey League, Fenway Sports Group, Boston Red Sox, Buffalo Bills Foundation, Major League Soccer, National Basketball Association, Pittsburgh Steelers, Buffalo Sabres Foundation, United States Women’s National Soccer Team, and Pittsburgh Pirates, have also signed on to the GAME PLAN.

Mr. Douglas Bunch, Public Delegate of the United States to the United Nations, noted that “sport has historically been a key mechanism for bringing communities together across divides and can be an important vehicle for promoting positive messages that contribute to social inclusion and cohesion”.

Chairs of Member States regional groups also delivered statements in support of the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime. In his remarks on behalf of the Western European and other States, **H.E. Mr. Fergal Mythen**, Permanent Representative of Ireland, noted the responsibility of the international community to “tackle the root causes and address the early warning signs associated with genocide and atrocity crimes”, and welcomed the launch of the GAME PLAN. On behalf of the Asia-Pacific States, **H.E. Mr. Fatumanava-o-Upolu III Pa’olelei Luteru**, Permanent Representative of the Independent State of Samoa, urged all Member States to “increase the efforts to prevent violent conflict and atrocity crimes, and in particular the crime of genocide”, and called on “all States that have not yet ratified or acceded to the Genocide Convention to consider doing so as a matter of priority”. Representing the Eastern European States, **H.E. Mr. Ljubomir**

Danailov Frchkoski, Permanent Representative of the Republic of North Macedonia, recalled the harmful impact of hate speech, which “violates the dignity of the members of the target groups”, and noted that the best strategy to combat it is to “act decisively in an early stage”. On behalf of the African States, the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Rwanda, **Mr. Robert Kayinamura**, highlighted that genocide is “an assault on our most fundamental values” and that “as we remember and honor the victims of the crime of genocide, we must fight and find ways of preventing genocide at the core of our common values”.