

Quadrennial Panel Discussion on Promoting Human Rights through Sport and the Olympic ideal (HRC res. 37/18)

Joint statement

Monday, July 1 • 10:00am - 12:00pm

Thank you, Mr. President. I deliver this statement on behalf of the SHE LEADS youth cohort.

Sports and play are crucial for the development of girls and young women. They promote physical and mental health, boost confidence, and foster teamwork and leadership skills.

Girls and young women face significant barriers to participation in sports, including cultural norms, lack of facilities, harassment and safety concerns. Rising costs and inflation contribute to the challenges faced by gyms, making them less accessible for many people, especially in regions like the global south

However, girls and young women are making remarkable efforts to achieve success in sports, but unfortunately have to overcome many obstacles. Their presence in certain disciplines is often restricted, confining them to activities perceived as less physical. National newspapers dedicate only a small portion of their articles to women's sports, ranging between 5 and 10% depending on the publication.¹

These challenges are even more pronounced for girls and young women with disabilities. Too often sports facilities and public spaces are not designed with girls and young women's needs.

We urge Member States and all stakeholders to:

- Invest in national sports programs and facilities that are safe, inclusive, and consider accessibility and gender-neutral design creating environments where girls and young women feel comfortable engaging in physical activity.
- Ensure fair treatment, gender equality and equal pay: Girls and young women athletes are not just competitors; they are individuals with fundamental human rights.
- Enable thorough inspections of sexual violence and harassment, including in major sporting events like the Olympic Games and FIFA.

Thank you.

¹ Study by Margaret Carlisle Duncan, Ph.D, on coverage of women's sports in daily newspapers: <https://la84.org/coverage-of-womens-sports-in-four-daily-newspapers/>