

The dangers of hate speech can be stymied through sports – UN Special Adviser Nderitu

Boston, 08 August 2023 – Sports has the unifying power to stop the next hate crime, including incitement to commit genocide and other related crimes, UN Under-Secretary-General Alice Wairimu Nderitu said in Boston, in remarks to partners of an initiative dedicated to countering hate speech through sports.

The Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide said it made sense to leverage the global appeal of sports to billions for the common good.

“Sports speaks to and makes a difference in the lives of billions of people. Hate speech uttered during a sports game or at a sports venue, echoes strongly. That act plants the seeds of discord. And when a sports team stands up against hate speech, the waves it creates hit every shore in the world,” said Special Adviser Nderitu in her remarks to members of the Eradicate Hate Sport Working Group.

Hosted by the Fenway Sports Group on Wednesday, August 02 2023, the gathering provided a platform to not only take stock of activities related to *The Game Plan* – a UN-led [Plan of Action for Countering Hate Speech through engagement with Sport](#) – but also an opportunity to introduce it to representatives of the local professional teams, as well as local colleges and universities. A similar meeting was hosted by Liverpool F.C. in April this year at Anfield, bringing together representatives of various major sports.

“For over a year, Fenway Sports Group has been working alongside the U.N. and the Eradicate Hate Global Summit to activate and connect the global sports community to this important work,” said Fenway Sports Group Partner Linda Henry. “The unspeakable acts of violence and cruelty that Special Adviser Nderitu and her team at the U.N. seek to combat have their roots in hate speech – something we all have the power to help address. The global sports community wields tremendous influence that can shift viewpoints and attitudes and our goal is to help the Special Advisor by using the power of sports to break through to communities in a way that transcends borders, languages, and cultures.”

The Game Plan acknowledges that hate speech is widespread in society, and that perpetrators of hate crimes are emboldened and encouraged by insufficient action by governments and other stakeholders to tackle it.

The highlight of the meeting was a testimony by Raymond Whitfield, a survivor of a racially motivated shooting in Buffalo, New York, in 2022, who spoke about the painful experience of the death of his mother and how it changed his life.

“*The Game Plan* makes us know that longstanding dehumanization can lead to violence, and that victims are not the problem. It challenges us to know that every passive, silent observer is part of the problem,” said Special Adviser Nderitu, noting that among sports teams, leagues, corporate partners, and billions of sports fans there are many silent, passive, observers.

The Game Plan was inspired by the Eradicate Hate Summit hosted by the Pittsburgh community leaders and has become a global platform to help protect people from experiencing discrimination, hate crimes, and other forms of violence.

“The Sports Working Group’s strength lies with its incredible partners,” said Laura Ellsworth, Co-Chair of the Sports Working Group and the Eradicate Hate Global Summit. “We encourage sports organizations who want to be part of this critical effort to join us at this year’s Eradicate Hate Global Summit in Pittsburgh to ensure our effort can reach as many different communities as possible.”

Launched on 9 December 2022, the Game Plan identifies strategies for speaking openly and honestly about hate speech with athletes, employees, the wider public, and those who are targeted by hate speech; promoting positive messages, practices, policies, and procedures; organizing specific outreach to communities of fans and players to educate about hate speech and its consequences and to try to

intervene before messages of hate that may lead to incitement of violence can take root; recognizing, rewarding, and reporting success stories and positive impacts of athletes and sports figures who join the Game Plan; and training at all levels to identify and address hate speech in line with international human rights law.