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**Balancing the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in and through sport policy**

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The 2030 Agenda emphasises the 'integrated and indivisible' nature of sustainable development. This language parallels the discourse of human rights. The principles of universality, indivisibility and interdependence that are central to human rights speak to the same of objectives as the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Human rights laws protect and promote the three dimensions of economic, social and environmental development in a substantive sense. They also reach further to the civil and political aspects of life that include the peace, justice and strong institutions aspired to by the SDGs.

When we seek to engage with the question of striking a balance between the three dimensions of sustainable development, it is important to recognise that human rights provide a framework in which such matters have often already been considered. On many occasions the questions we might wish discuss in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals will have the added benefit of a body of human rights jurisprudence and legal interpretation established internationally, regionally and domestically. Only last week in this building the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights affirmed that the realisation of human rights is central to successfully achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The impacts of human rights are visible in many areas of social policy. For the purpose of our discussion however this crucially includes both

sport and business, which are increasingly understood to be interrelated. Sport as a vehicle to generate business and inward investment and the business of sport are two sides of the same coin. This is demonstrated in the outworking of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the heightened interest in determining how exactly sport fits within this particular space. Both sport and business have significant potential of course when it comes to accomplishing the targets reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Commonwealth and its member states have consistently highlighted 'protecting the integrity of sport'. More specifically, the vision of the Commonwealth Games is one of a sports movement operating with integrity across and within member states. Central to this vision is a conviction that human rights compliant outcomes require the adoption of processes that adhere to the values which underpin human rights laws as well as their substantive content. This expands upon the fundamental commitment to treaties and international instruments contained within the Commonwealth Charter.

The links between the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights, and the role that sport can play in their realisation is self-evident. A global platform with local relevance that operates across the private, public and community sectors in an area of life that brings people together in a positive affirmation of our common humanity. This vision of global sport is a vision equally articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. If progress cannot be made towards the respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights and a simultaneous contribution made to the Sustainable Development Goals in such a ripe environment as sport then we must surely have grounds to be despondent.

Yet, it seems that rhetoric and reality are some distance apart. There is a need to make unambiguous connections that demonstrate clearly how legally binding treaty obligations provide a basis through which the aim of policy coherence can be achieved. Some of the Sustainable Development Goals and what they should mean in practice accord directly with international instruments. For example, when we consider Good Health and Well-being, Quality Education or Gender Equality it is obvious that the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women resonate. But, we also must understand what these legal obligations mean when applied in a specific context such as sport. In other words, we need to make the links that can help drive policy coherence. It is here that the potential of National Human Rights Institutions has not yet been fully realised or utilised.

In 2015, the Merida Declaration set out the role that National Human Rights Institutions should play in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The statutory role which they maintain in advising national governments on their human rights obligations, whilst remaining fully independent of the state and reporting to the United Nations on their domestic situations is important. The Merida Declaration recognises that because of this structure, National Human Rights Institutions are uniquely placed to play a bridging role between stakeholders and to promote transparent, participatory and inclusive national processes of implementation and monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals.

How this relates directly to sport requires a greater degree of scrutiny than has been the case to date. The Commonwealth Games, Commonwealth Advisory Board on Sport and the Mega Sports Events and Human Rights Platform have all provided forums in which this has started to occur. However, the direct engagement of National Human Rights Institutions remains limited. Relationships need to be fostered in forums such as these and local relationships need to be promoted between National Human Rights Institutions and sports governing bodies. At the same time, the subject needs to be actively promoted as an agenda item on the platforms where National Human Rights Institutions already engage.

Together, the New Zealand, Australian Commissions and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, as chair of the Commonwealth Forum of NHRIs, have been actively exploring how this work can be supported at both global and domestic levels. We have also been seeking to liaise and partner with other human rights actors, such as the Commonwealth Games Federation, UNICEF and the Institute for Human Rights and Business.

Since all three National Human Rights Institutions operate within Commonwealth member states, this is one arena in which our attention is focused. Working towards the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London 2018, an option may be to seek endorsement for a declaration on the role of National Human Rights Institutions in sport. This should include a direct reference that recognises the related objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals and the human rights treaty obligations, as a reflection of the connections already accepted by the Merida Declaration. Once this piece of the jigsaw puzzle has been inserted, the force of human rights law in addressing the question of how to balance the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in and through sport policy in a coherent manner may be easier achieved.