The Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, Mr. Adolf Ogi, visited Monrovia, Liberia from 28 February to 2 March 2007. His delegation included the Director of his New York Office Djibril Diallo, his Special Assistant David Winiger, Media Adviser Robert Ruoff and four journalists: Pierre Lepidi of “Le Monde”, Marco Morell of “SonntagsZeitung”, Johannes Von Dohnanyi and Thomas Kern of “SonntagsBlick” and the photographer Urs Flüeler of “Keystone photos”. The principal purpose of the visit was to launch a five-week nationwide “Sports for Peace” Programme to be held throughout Liberia’s 15 counties. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) donated $76,000 worth of sports equipment for the Programme.

The Programme was initiated by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the IOC and the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace. It was officially launched on Friday 2 March at the Antoinette Tubman Stadium, Monrovia by the Special Adviser, the President of Liberia Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, representatives of the Liberian National Olympic Committee and Mr. Alan Doss, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Coordinator of UN Operations in Liberia. The President of Liberia gave the inaugural kick-off of the “Sports for Peace” Programme at a soccer game at the Stadium and both the President and the Special Adviser addressed the thousands present at the ceremony. The Special Adviser stressed sports’ role as an essential tool for creating peace, national reconciliation and harmony. This message was underlined by the President who recalled how during the country’s 14-year civil war, sporting activities, especially football matches involving the Liberian national team, the Lone Star, brought sudden voluntary ceasefires between the warring factions.

The launch followed the lighting of the peace torch in the morning with short remarks made by Mr. Ogi and a march by hundreds of participants to the stadium. There was drumming and singing of peace songs as the participants marched.

The Special Adviser had a number of meetings whilst in Monrovia including a courtesy call to President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf whereupon he outlined his work as Special Adviser and the role of sport especially in post-conflict societies.
The Special Adviser also informed the President of the “Jeux de la Paix” held in DRC after the first round of presidential elections in August 2006. He mentioned that the success of the Sport for Peace programme in Liberia would make Liberia an example to be followed for other countries where sport could be used as a vehicle to consolidate peace and reintegrate ex-combatants.

The Special Adviser also met with Mr. Alan Doss, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Co-ordinator of UN Operations in Liberia, to explore ways of sustainably integrating sport into peacekeeping activities of UNMIL. He then met with the UNMIL Force Commander, Lieutenant General Chikadibia Obiakor of Nigeria, and addressed UNMIL peacekeepers about the use of sport as a tool for reconciliation and peace.

On 1 March, a Press Conference was held with the Minister of Youth and Sports, Ms. Jamesetta Howard Wolokolie, and heads of national sporting federations.

Thereafter, the Special Adviser gave a Lecture at the University of Liberia’s Public Policy Forum on “Sports as a Vehicle for Peace and Development”. The lecture of 30 minutes was followed by an animated question and answer session. About 300 people attended the lecture in which the Special Adviser told the students to use sport as a tool kit of life, stressing that that every Liberian girl and boy should have the opportunity to make mistakes on the field of sport so as to feel how to react under the pressure of defeat, adding, “this lesson of sport helps us to fit well into society.”

The Special Adviser and his delegation also attended a community soccer event organized by Right To Play. The event was held at West Point, a very populated community situated just off Broad Street, one of Liberia’s main streets. Many former combatants live in West Point and sporting activities have been used to keep them occupied and encourage reconciliation and reintegration.

David Winiger
Special Assistant to Mr. Ogi
Sport for Peace Programme
2 March - 7 April

Special Report

Background
The Sport for Peace programme was officially launched at the Antoinette Tubman Stadium on Friday, 2 March 2007 by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Mr. Adolf Ogi, the Special Adviser to the SG on Sport for Development and Peace. The ceremony was also attended by the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Mr. Alan Doss as well as diplomats, other top government officials and civil society. The launch had an approximate attendance of 5,000 persons and featured speeches as well as a cultural display. Five weeks of sporting activities in volleyball, kickball and football were thereafter organized with the finals taking place on Saturday, 7 April 2007.

The Sport for Peace programme was organized by a Taskforce headed jointly by UNMIL Public Information Community Outreach Unit and the Ministry of Youth and Sport. The Taskforce comprises all heads of national sporting associations (Liberia Football Association, Liberia Basketball Federation, Liberia Kickball Federation, Liberian National Olympic Committee and Liberia Volleyball Federation) as well as groups for the Disabled and the NGO Right To Play. The Ministries of Youth and Sport and Internal Affairs are represented on the Taskforce. The Taskforce was constituted by the SRSG Mr. Alan Doss in May 2006 in response to a Code Cable of 6 May 2006 from the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping, Mr. Jean Marie Guehenno, on the use of sports to advance peace-building goals. The Taskforce was to map out strategies for short, medium and long-term development of sports in the country, in the interest of peace.
Structure of the games in the counties

The competition was organized along the lines of UNMIL Military four Sectors. Sector 1 comprises Montserado and Margibi Counties; Sector 2 – Bomi, Cape Mount, Lofa and Gbarpolu counties; Sector 3 – Bong, Nimba and Grand Bassa counties; Sector 4 – Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Sinoe, Grand Kru, Sinoe and Rivercess counties. Sectors are delineated on the basis of population. Counties within a Sector competed to have Sector winners. Players forming county teams were selected the districts within a county. This means that 56 districts in Liberia had opportunity to be involved in a single competition, the first time this would happen in more than ten years. All counties participated in soccer and kickball competitions. Sector winners were transported to the capital city Monrovia for the semi finals and finals.

Financial and logistical support

The Taskforce received a response from the IOC agreeing to provide the required sporting materials with factory value of $76,000 but whose market value is thought to be more that $130,000. The proposal had indicated that UNMIL would support the event by providing information materials such as T-shirts, flyers, posters and media, and transporting the teams to and from various locations. The government agreed it would collaborate with the national sporting associations to provide technical support. The Taskforce was to further seek funding from commercial entities to take care of the financial aspects of the programme including payment of allowances to the referees, hiring and preparing playing fields, providing accommodation and feeding for teams visiting other counties and providing feeding and accommodating to all teams in the semi finals and final in Monrovia.

Arrival of sporting materials from IOC

The programme had been planned to commence end of January. This date was shifted to 2 March because of the delay in the arrival of the shipment of the sporting materials from the IOC. The items were cleared from the Ports mid February. The sporting materials included:

1. Soccer boots - 1400
2. football Jerseys - 34
3. Soccer balls 1200  
4. Football hoses - 1400  
5. Kick ball jerseys - 52  
6. Volleyball jerseys - 75  
7. Whistles - 250  
8. Inflating pumps - 210  
9. Football Goalpost nets – 100  
10. Volleyball nets – 100  
11. Volleyballs - 200

**Issues with Jerseys**

In the proposal sent to the IOC, we had indicated we would require jerseys. By ‘jerseys’ we had meant both tops and shorts. However, the IOC understood jerseys to mean only tops. Therefore, we received a consignment of only tops. Teams in the counties requested to have both tops and shorts. However, this misunderstanding did not affect the overall enthusiasm for the games as teams provided their own shorts.

**Implementation**

Organizing the teams

The first major challenge was how to, a) take the message of the programme to the grassroots and, b) to organize the teams in the various sporting categories in the various counties considering the emphasis that players should be selected from districts making each county.

The Taskforce employed two strategies:

a. The involvement of UNMIL Civil Affairs Officers in the counties. UNMIL CA Officers are in all the counties and they work directly with the county civil authorities. UNMIL PI had requested that a CA colleague be a member of the Taskforce. CA was therefore au fait with all developments. CA officers in the counties were requested to assist in enlisting the support of the county civil authorities and also to help mobilize the participation of other community dwellers.

b. The involvement of County Sports Coordinators. The Ministry of Youth and Sport has a sports coordinator in each county. These coordinators
were tasked to identify players and organize them into football, kickball and volleyball teams. They were to scan the various districts in their respective counties before selecting players.

Distribution of materials
On receiving the materials, the Taskforce locked them up in two containers within UNMIL premises and set up an inventory database.

Several methods for distribution were considered. The Taskforce was concerned about transparency and efficient utilization of the materials. The agreed plan for distributed was to be implemented as follows:

1. UNMIL would transport the same quantity of materials to all county headquarters to be received by CA officers.
2. The CA officers would organize a small hand-over ceremony.
3. The Civil Affairs officers were to handover the items to the County Superintendents (as political heads of the counties) who would at the same time hand them over to the County Sports Coordinators. The reason for this was to ensure that both the Superintendent and the Sports Coordinator are aware of items being received and the Superintendents are expected to monitor use of the materials.
4. The Taskforce prepared a special handover note that was signed by the receiving Superintendents and the Sports Coordinators. The Taskforce currently has dully signed handover notes from all counties.

Based on assessments of requirements for the Sport for Peace programme, the Taskforce decided to provide each county with following:

- 40 soccer balls
- 41 pairs of playing boots (for both kickball and football)
- 10 inflating pumps
- 36 pairs of hoses
- 4 goalpost nets
- 10 whistles
- 2 sets of jerseys
• 50 Sport for Peace T-shirts
This means some sporting materials are still in stock. (See attached for details.)

**Special case with volleyball**
The Volleyball Federation made a case of volleyball not being played in most counties and the period was too short to train players and raise volleyball teams. Indeed, many County Sports Coordinators said it would be difficult. The Taskforce then decided that volleyball teams would only be raised in the four Sector headquarter towns of Monrovia, Gbarnga, Zwedru and Tubmanburg and decided to plan a separate volleyball tournament later when the Volleyball Federation will have visited all counties to promote the sport.
Each of the Sector headquarters got:
- 7 volleyballs
- 2 sets of volleyball jerseys
- 4 volleyball nets

**Preparing the playing pitches**
Each of the 15 County Coordinators requested and was given cash payment to hire, where necessary, and prepare the playing pitches. Many of the playing fields in especially the outlying counties were in state of disrepair and needed to be upgraded. In the big towns, the pitches were much better.

**Launch**
The launch was successful with series of events lined up. The participation of the Mr. Adolf Ogi gave it a much-needed impetus. Launch events included:

1. A Peace Torch Race – athletes representing the 15 counties ran through a 15 KM distance leading up to the stadium.
2. Parade – Approximately 1500 persons including athletes and the youth marched through principal streets singing peace songs and carrying banners depicting peace messages.
3. Soccer event at West Point – a densely populated community in Monrovia in which a good number of ex-combatants live. The event attracted up to 2500 persons. This was led by the Ngo Right To Play.
4. Lecture at the University – a lecture on the topic: “Sport as a Vehicle for Peace and Development” delivered by Mr. Ogi to an audience of 300 including students, lecturers and top government officials.

5. Formal programme at the stadium – inspiring speeches were made by President Sirleaf, Mr. Ogi, Mr. Doss and Mr. Philbert Brown who is the President of the Liberia National Olympic Committee who also read a special message from the IOC president, Jacques Rogge. There were musical and cultural performances.

6. Sports events – featured female kickball teams, the disabled and male football teams.

Events in the counties
After the launch, events in the counties commenced. On the whole, 33 events were organized: 14 in soccer, 14 in kickball and 5 in volleyball. The events were played on a knock out basis. Each county event attracted an approximate number of 2000 spectators. The semi finals attracted 4000 and finals approximately 8,000.

Meeting set objectives
The programme accomplished its set objectives. These include:

1. Hundreds of sports men and women were moved from one county to the other to participate in sporting events. This fostered friendship among them. For the finals, more than 200 sports men and women came to the capital city – most of them were coming for the first time. They stayed together with people from other counties and interacted with them. Thousands of spectators from especially nearby counties also came to Monrovia. Senators and Superintendents representing participating counties accompanied their teams.

2. Each event provided opportunity for both the United Nations and government to pass on pertinent social messages. In the course of the tournament, the Taskforce 160,000 flyers on HIV/AIDS, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and on peace to spectators and to the wider communities, 5,000 condoms, 6,000 Sport for Peace T-shirts, 10,000 stickers. Also 30 banners hung, 25 radio stations in the capital city and
in other parts of the country carried sport for peace messages. Two television stations ran advertisements; UNMIL Radio frequently carried promos on non violence, peace and reconciliation throughout the duration of the tournament. (UNMIL radio covers the entire country.)

3. Officials of the national sporting associations attended games in various parts of the country where they spotted talents which they hope to nurture and incorporate into national teams.

4. The tournament, especially the provision of sporting materials, brought sports to the grassroots population especially to the districts. A particular Sports Coordinator narrated how they would in the past travel more than 70 miles just to inflate a football. Now they have inflating pumps and other materials.

5. The whole event strengthened the capacity of the Sports Coordinators in the counties to promote sports.

6. The county civil authorities seized the opportunity to rally community members in support of government development efforts.

General constraints

1. Finance
The Taskforce had sought and got a commitment from Comium, a telecom organization, to finance aspects of the programme, especially those aspects that required cash payments. On the day of the launch, Comium dramatically pulled out explaining that the final authorizing officer was not in the country. After the launch, the Taskforce had to quickly consider possible options. UNMIL Administration quickly approved a request for the shortfall for cash funding and the Taskforce got a bit of support from Mittal Steel.

2. Logistics
The whole exercise was a logistical nightmare. Many of the roads are in bad shape and in some cases it required a travel of up to three days for players to get to venue of games. UNMIL Military was very supportive, providing vehicles to take teams.
UNMIL Administration approved helicopter movement of teams in some cases. But one helicopter can only take 22 persons. A full team of football, kickball and volleyball is in excess of 50 persons. With two helicopters (which was the most we got), team coaches agonizingly dropped some players. There were also some postponements of matches because of bad weather which could not enable helicopters to fly.

**Finals in Monrovia**

Moving up to 200 persons to Monrovia for the finals was challenging in terms of coordinating the various teams and ensuring their comfort. The Taskforce appointed Sector Coordinators who were able to rally the different counties within their respective Sectors and coordinated with logistic and operations committee to ensure players arrived in time for games and also that they were comfortable.

The finals featured events in soccer, kickball and volleyball.

- **Football:** Grand Bassa were champions defeating Maryland County
- **Kickball:** Montserado won having defeated Lofa
- **Volleyball:** Cape Mount defeated Bong

The SRSG Mr. Alan Doss attended the finals. Ms. Francis Johnson-Morris, Minister of Justice represented President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf who was out of town, Minister of Youth and Sport, Ms Jamesetta Howard Wolokolie was also at the event which was climaxed by a victory musical concert that featured top local and sub-regional artists.

**Post final transportation**

Getting them back to their respective counties after the finals was a most difficult task. The last batch of players was transported back on 13 April.
Lessons learned

Some good lessons have been learned including:

1. The Sport for Peace programme reinforced the fact of sports being a powerful tool to bring people together and foster peace and development. This was practically demonstrated throughout the competition with players forging relationships, with opportunity of the events being used to raise awareness of pertinent social issues and with teams and other community members being united in love for sports and for their country. For Liberians, it was the first in living memory they would see such gathering of people from different parts of the country, at same venue (final), united in love for sports and by extension their country.

2. The Taskforce realized that financial and logistical requirements had been grossly underestimated. Peculiarities of different counties did not allow for across-the-board estimations. It is perhaps necessary to treat each county on the basis of its unique characteristics.

3. The effectiveness of the Civil Affairs officers and County Sports Coordinators in the counties in mobilizing, enlisting the support of civil authorities for the sporting events.

4. The success of a programme of this magnitude requires concerted efforts, the active participation of all stakeholders and support at the highest level. UNMIL top management came to the rescue at critical stages when things appeared to be stalled. The involvement of President Sirleaf galvanized support from other government officials. The coming of Mr. Ogi increased the momentum and underlined the seriousness behind the exercise.

5. In future while requesting for materials, the proposal has to provide detailed specifications of what is required.
The Way forward

After a largely successful event, it is important that the Sport for Peace programme is not a one-off event. Here are suggestions for way forward:

1. The Sport for Peace Taskforce has to be intact and should continue to meet to consider follow-up plans.

2. The Taskforce has a challenge to ensure that the materials distributed to the counties are appropriately utilized. To ensure this, the Taskforce through the Ministries of Youth and Sport and Internal Affairs should encourage the Sports Coordinators to give quarterly reports on how the materials are being used. Members of the Taskforce should plan regular visits to the various counties to investigate how these materials are being utilized. Some Sporting materials are still in reserve. Any Sports Coordinator who misuses materials will no longer benefit from what is in stock. A proper management system of these assets has been put in place and should be strictly complied with.

3. Sport for Peace programme will continue with sporting events now holding within counties and districts. The sporting materials left will be used to organize these events. County Sports Coordinators are to submit a proposal to the Taskforce on a sporting event within each county taking into consideration the particular needs of each county.

4. The Taskforce has to put together another proposal that will identify key sporting facilities in strategic towns in the country and seek funding to rehabilitate them. Rehabilitating such facilities will ensure that there is less emphasis on Monrovia and it will also ease logistical problems especially in movement of teams to far away towns where better facilities exist.

5. The Sport for Peace programme should be an annual sporting festival. In future, corporate organizations and government can take the lead in organizing the programme. Such a programme will still require the support of big international sporting organizations.
Conclusion
After more than nine months of intensive planning, the Sport for Peace programme has been successfully implemented. It was the first ever Sport for Peace programme in Liberia. It's been adjudged by the various sporting Federations, county teams and civil society as well-organized. Of course, there were expected lapses which can be avoided in future. This programme has succeeded in making “Sport for Peace” not just an event, but a philosophy lodged in the sub-conscious of Liberians: that sport is a veritable road to achieving lasting peace.