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# WLF CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN INTERNATIONAL SPORT

## AGENDA

7 - 10 JULY 2021

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## ABOUT

While sport has historically brought people together, large-scale sporting events often run the risk of human rights violation. International sports organizations have come under scrutiny a number of times for their role in human rights violations committed by countries that are granted host status. Also of relevance are aspects of athletes' human rights, especially those of child athletes, including issues of inclusion, sexual assault, and doping, among others.

With the Tokyo Olympics scheduled to take place in 2021, and the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar mired in controversy due to human rights concerns, there is no better time to address the human rights aspects of mega-sporting events.

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## AGENDA

### Panel 1: Human rights violations in mega-sporting events

Mega sporting events have often been in the spotlight for human rights abuse over the years. Because of the scale of these events, rights of athletes, workers, forced evictions, and suppression of the freedom of speech and expression are commonly alleged throughout the stages of preparation as well as during the events themselves. Among other instances, allegations have arisen during the organization of the 2010 Commonwealth Games in India, the Sochi Olympics in 2014, the Summer Olympics in Brazil in 2016, the FIFA World Cup in Russia in 2018, and most recently, in Qatar, in preparation for the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Additionally, these events court further controversy involving rights of child athletes, sexual abuse allegations, mistreatment of adult athletes, and discriminatory rules and policies. This subject will be divided into two panels – the first, on the human rights of child and adult athletes; and the second, on incidental violations involving workers and residents in host countries.

#### Panel 1.1: Human Rights of Athletes

**Date:** 7th July, 2021

**Time:** 1130 GMT

#### Panel 1.2: Human Rights of Workers and Residents in host countries

**Date:** 7th July, 2021

**Time:** 1230 GMT

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### Panel 2: Implementation of obligations by sports' governing bodies

Despite claiming for years that human rights will be given greater prominence in how governing bodies conduct business, and suggesting that bidding processes would be rethought, there is little to evidence progress. Policies that disqualify participants for the expression of political, racial, or religious propaganda also take away from the progressive image these organizations create. In addition, the governing bodies themselves impose discriminatory policies against athletes and fail to protect them against abuse and discrimination.

With the ideological core of these events is to bring people together through sport, the failure of existing efforts indicates that there is much work to be done towards achieving non-discrimination and upholding human rights. Strengthening of ethics committees, greater and more diverse representation in management, and stringent enforcement of human rights policies are essential in overcoming this challenge. The panel on this agenda will discuss existing efforts by governing bodies to further human rights, their successes, challenges, ongoing efforts, and what further steps can be taken for better enforcement of human rights of athletes, as well as those involved in the staging of events. The question of sports governing bodies' non-intervention in non-sport related human rights violations will also be addressed.

**Date:** 8th July, 2021

**Time:** 1100 GMT

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### **Panel 3: The responsibility of host countries in upholding rights**

In the preparation leading up to host mega sporting events, countries often undertake largescale construction and development in order to meet global standards. More often than not, this involves the eviction of local residents to make room for construction as well as the use of migrant labour, to meet stringent timelines with negligible social security, and poor wages and living conditions.

The panel on the responsibility of host countries will discuss the human rights obligations of countries leading up to the bidding process and once they are granted host status. The need to strengthen legislations and efforts to promote human rights, and the necessary consequences of failure to adhere to the guidelines of sporting organizations will also be addressed.

**Date:** 8th July, 2021

**Time:** 1215 GMT

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### **Panel 4: The role of sponsors, broadcasters, and other stakeholders in addressing human rights violations**

As per the 2015 Report of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee Report on the possibilities of using sport to promote human rights for all and to strengthen universal respect for them, only 0.5 per cent of all commercial sponsorships is focused on female athletes. Additionally, media coverage for women's sport is estimated at 5 per cent.

There has been a growing need for these partners and sponsors to adopt human rights policies, disclose efforts to implement human rights due diligence, and to remedy human rights violations within and incidental to their organization. The panel on stakeholder roles in addressing human rights in sport will discuss the implementation strategies and contractual obligations of sponsors, broadcasters, and other stakeholders, as well as their obligations under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

**Date:** 9th July, 2021

**Time:** 1100 GMT

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## **Panel 5: Human Rights Due Diligence and Applicable Standards**

The 2011 UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights lay down the need for corporate human rights due diligence. A number of international laws, treaties, and guidelines exist outlining the human rights responsibilities of States and other organizations.

This panel will discuss existing guidelines, standards, and laws that govern various aspects of human rights in sport, their effectiveness, gaps in the law, and ways to strengthen and create global policy.

**Date:** 9th July, 2021

**Time:** 1215 GMT

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## **Panel 6: Redressal mechanisms for victims**

The UN Principles also address the need for corporate bodies to set up redressal mechanisms for human rights violations. This panel will delve into the various organizational, national and international redressal mechanisms that exist for athletes who have been victims of sexual assault, discrimination, racism, and other human rights violations, as well as the avenues that exist or are lacking for workers and individuals whose rights are violated incidental to the organization of mega sporting events.

**Date:** 10th July, 2021

**Time:** 1100 GMT

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## **Panel 7: The Way Forward**

In the 10th anniversary of the introduction of the UN Guiding Principles, there is a need to adopt the BHR standards in the context of sports and ensure that this is applicable throughout the next decade.

This panel will address the deficiencies in existing mechanisms of human rights implementation in sport and create a tangible body of recommendations for a safer, more inclusive future that places human rights at the heart of international sport.

**Date:** 10th July, 2021

**Time:** 1215 GMT

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