



SPECIAL ADVISER
TO THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL
ON SPORT FOR
DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE



Message by Mr. Wilfried Lemke

Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General
on Sport for Development and Peace

Under-Secretary-General

2009 UNRWA Gaza Summer Games



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I have always believed passionately in the transforming power of sport, to make profound changes in the lives of each and every one of us. Sport's promotion of team spirit, mental and physical discipline, its potential to evoke a broad range of emotions and its simple ability to make life fun, makes it a powerful tool for education, health and human development. Ultimately, sport is a powerful force for peace, uniting people of all ages, social classes, cultures and religions. This is also true for the Middle East and in light of the recent conflict in the region, it is a particular joy for me to bring this message to Gaza and this year's Summer Games.

As the Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, it is with great pleasure and pride that I offer my support to the third UNRWA Gaza Summer Games. Congratulations to all of you: to participants young and old, to parents supporting their children, to families and friends and of course to the organizers. Your commitment and dedication is a source of pride for all of us in the United Nations system. You are an inspiration and I thank you for this.

The Games provide Palestinian children with fun, creative activities providing a welcome distraction from the daily hardship. The event has now established itself permanently in Gaza as a high energy antidote in a place so isolated by offering programs which keep the children physically and mentally stimulated and provide them with important lessons of life. The Summer Games also represent hope for the children in a region that has endured too much hardship and too many conflicts. It is our responsibility that the young generation is encouraged to pursue the aspirations of a better future and sport is a valuable tool in this pursuit. It is my hope that parents support their children's participation in these Games because for those living in the Gaza, the Games represent the first step in a long journey towards a peaceful existence with sufficient living standards based on an indispensable educational system.

UNRWA's invaluable work is based on the understanding that children are our future and it is through them that change will be achieved. If we can continue to ensure that children are given the opportunity to develop life and leadership skills and emerge as role models and ambassadors for peace, then we will undoubtedly achieve the shared goal of a brighter future for Gaza. The recent conflict has meant that UNRWA has faced a myriad of challenges when organizing this year's games, but their unwavering commitment to the families and children who benefit from the Summer Games encouraged them to overcome these challenges and provide the foundation for what will prove to be successful Games in 2009.

I wish each of you great success during these Summer Games and I provide my full support to UNRWA's activities!

Wilfried Lemke