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PRESS RELEASE

Subject: The FC Barcelona Foundation, UNESCO and the European Parliament are launching the “Youth voices against racism” programme, an initiative in which young Europeans will be able to debate this issue.

Background

Given the long-standing commitment of the FC Barcelona Foundation, UNESCO and the European Parliament to eradicating violent and racist behaviour, the three organisations have come together to continue with their campaign by means of a European programme.

Prior to this, the FC Barcelona Foundation and UNESCO, the UNESCOCAT Centre and the National UNESCO Committee signed a partnership agreement on 23 November 2007 in which one of the main themes was promoting the values of sport through education and awareness raising activities, paying special attention to the struggle against racism and violence in sport.

At the same time the European Parliament has just finalised its White Paper on Sport. Emine Bozkurt, Dutch member of the European Parliament, who initiated the influential European resolution to tackle racism in football, emphasizes the social role sport can play in this matter: “Sport is a mirror of society, with all of its shortcomings. But let us not forget that, above all, sport offers great possibilities for social inclusion.”

The intention and goals of “Youth voices against racism”

With this programme the three organisations are starting up a unifying dialogue that gives a voice to young organizations, members of the ECCAR (European Coalition of Cities Against Racism), which will attempt to provide recommendations and directives which are applicable in their cities and geared towards fighting racism and discrimination while simultaneously fostering diversity. “Young people are the real torch bearers for this message,” says Marcio Barbosa, UNESCO’s Deputy Director-

General, “and we want to invite them to become decisive players on this stage so that they are heard at all levels of society.”

The forums are to feature debates on a wide array of issues connected with racism such as:

- Prevention and taking on board tolerance of cultural diversity and peaceful community living.
- Help for victims in their efforts and defence.
- Raising awareness in the community and effective opposition.

Racism detracts from football and sport in general. And even though football is not the cause of racism, it is true that racist behaviour can often be found inside its grounds. “At FC Barcelona we are convinced that football, even though it is only a sport, provides us with valuable tools for combating violence and racism and fostering integration in our society,” argues Joan Laporta, FC Barcelona club chairman. For this reason the three organisations seek to bring football and sport in general into the debate about racism so that young people can shed light on how to eradicate racism from sport and how to use it as a means of getting rid of racism. “Racism is the opponent all we players would like to see get thrashed,” says FC Barcelona first team football captain Carles Puyol. “This programme is yet another example of the FC Barcelona Foundation’s social commitment and the way in which it seeks out front-rank allies for its cause.”

The intention is that young people should give their views on these issues and think about how to act at the municipal level, in their towns and cities. This is because we believe that these places are an ideal location for putting into practice these measures which will have to be mapped out in a document that is made available to the public.

Stages and schedule

May 2008: Launch of the Programme

Starting point featuring a joint statement of commitment and the programme.

This is therefore not a one-off action but instead a programme involving a set of activities which seek to involve young people in a debate about the social foundations of their future.

June – October 2008: Young People’s Forum

The Young People’s Forum will be held as part of the ECCAR, a coalition set up in 2004 by UNESCO and which includes 69 cities in 15 European countries. The overarching aim of this coalition is to combat racism by offering local authorities an action programme which enables more effective implementation of anti-discrimination policies.

November 2008: The Manifesto

Once the Forum has finished, young Europeans from cities that are members of the ECCAR will draw up a manifesto which will contain the conclusions drawn from the debates. This stage will culminate with the reading of their recommendations to the European Parliament.

For more information about the ECCAR, visit: http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/ev.php-URL_ID=10629&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

This final stage of the project, planned for the middle of November 2008, will be attended by representatives from the Young People's Forum together with representatives from the European Parliament, UNESCO, and FC Barcelona and its Foundation.

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