

UNESCO'S ROUND TABLE MEETING ON TRADITIONAL SPORTS AND GAMES

ALMATY, KAZAKHSTAN, 5-6 NOVEMBER 2006

FINAL REPORT

UNESCO's round table meeting on Traditional Sports and Games (TSG) was preceded by a presentation of traditional Kazakhstan equestrian sports in November at a special horse track near Almaty. Participants had the opportunity to watch sports such as *kız kuu* (chasing the bride), *tenge ilu* (catching the bags) and *kokpar* (fighting for the blue wolf). After the demonstration participants were invited to the nearby Kazakh *yourta* where a traditional Kazakh meal was served. That evening all participants were invited to the closing ceremony of the World Festival of Traditional Wrestling Sports.

The round table discussion took place on the morning of 6 November in Almaty Municipal Hall. Mr Alexei Panteleevich Berejnoi, representative of Kazakhstan authorities was elected Chairman of the meeting. Mr Maurice Tapsoba, representative of Burkina Faso, became Vice-Chairman and Professor Wojciech Lipoński of Poland and Professor Pierre Parlebas of France were elected Rapporteurs to the meeting and compiled this report. Mr Marcellin Dally of UNESCO, Paris, made introductory remarks at the meeting, and was followed by Ms Tarja Virtanen, UNESCO's representative in Kazakhstan. Mr Panteleevich welcomed the participants and gave a talk on traditional sports typical for not only Kazakhstan but also for the surrounding countries, such as Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Tatarstan.

Two rounds of presentations followed. In the first round the participants introduced themselves while during the second one, they presented their regional and institutional activities. The second round was initiated by Mr Maurice Tapsoba of Burkina Faso, who explained the situation of traditional sports in his country, and in particular the traditional forms of wrestling and explained how traditional sports are treated as an element of national policy in Burkina Faso and that TSG festivals are organized there on a yearly basis.

Mr Arutyun Avetisyan, representative of the Russian Federation, spoke about the situation of traditional sports in his country, where TSG are both much appreciated and also have special authority/commission with general sports authorities. He explained how TSG are treated as an element of general state policy in the Russian Federation and are supported by state authorities regardless of ethnic identity, religion, etc. Every year an international festival of traditional sports is held for all nations of the Russian Federation.

Hungary was represented by Mr András Lakatos, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Hungary to UNESCO. His presentation concerned not only the situation of TSG in Hungary, but also their wider role in international cultural and political relations. He emphasized the fact that Hungary, as a comparatively small country, has a tremendous record of sports achievements, exceeding the achievements of some larger and more populous countries. TSG are treated in Hungary as "a part of intangible cultural heritage and guarantee of enrichment for societies".

Professor Lev Yugay, representative of Uzbekistan, talked about his country's politics towards TSG. In Uzbekistan TSG are treated as "an element of just gained independence". TSG are given equal status to Olympic sports and are part of the general cultural policy, which is guaranteed by the fact that culture and sport are administered by the same ministry.

Mr Simon Taro, representative of ECOWAS (Economic Community of Western African States) presented rich activities of west African nations on TSG, especially in wrestling, which is

developed under the Wrestling Association of West Africa. He said that an inventory of the African TSG is under way. Objectives of developing TSG in west African countries were elaborated, such as promoting African sports, creating national and regional sport organizations specialized in African sports. He said that organizing specialized events connected with promoting African sports and finally favouring emergence of national elites in the field of African TSG, especially wrestling, were also important cultural and political targets.

Mr Willy Baxter, the President of the Association of Celtic Wrestling and representative of Scotland, spoke about the importance of traditional sports for Celtic nations, such as Brittany, Cornwall, Wales, Ireland, Iceland and of course, his native Scotland. In all these countries a growing ethnic cultural identity is supported by traditional festivals and games, with Celtic types of wrestling and Scottish Highland Games and gatherings as most important, visible events.

Professor Pierre Parlebas of Sorbonne University, France, discussed the necessity of establishing scientific foundations for TSG, as a common cultural platform for humanity. He emphasized the importance of a methodological approach necessary for specialized research on TSG and briefly described his initiatives associated with TSG at Sorbonne.

A similar presentation was delivered by Professor Wojciech Lipoński of Poland, who discussed research on TSG as a part of more general ethnographic and anthropological studies neglected internationally for a long time. Outcomes of such studies should include searching for original roots of TSG as a part of general human culture. Professor Lipoński presented his World Sports Encyclopaedia in the English and French versions, which were published under UNESCO's auspices, and also his book in Polish on methodology of ethnographic research on TSG, which will soon be translated into English. He also described the situation of TSG in Poland, where after a long period of negligence TSG started to be revitalized. At the Physical Education Academy in Poznań, a small department, the Laboratory of Sports Ethnology and Olympism, was created, and is one of the first of this kind in the world.

Mr Dally of UNESCO summarized the discussion and presented a draft final communiqué which was accepted unanimously by all participants (see the attached text). After Mr Dally's presentation the round table meeting was concluded. Mr Dally, Mr Lakatos and Mr Lipoński delivered short speeches expressing thanks to the Kazakh authorities.

Rapporteurs:

Professor Pierre Parlebas

Professor Wojciech Lipoński

FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ
INTERGOVERNMENTAL ROUND TABLE MEETING
ON TRADITIONAL SPORTS AND GAMES

ALMATY, 6 NOVEMBER 2006

The meeting was opened on behalf of the host country by the representative of the Ministry for the Promotion of Tourism and Sports, Mr Alexei Panteleevich Berejnoi.

After the welcoming addresses by the representatives of the host country and Ms Tarja Virtanen, Head of the UNESCO Office in Almaty, the meeting considered the items of its amended agenda.

Several delegates and the representatives of governments, one regional intergovernmental organization (IGO), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and universities unanimously acclaimed the validity of the round table, which followed on from a collective consultation of NGOs, IGOs and specialized bodies, held at UNESCO's Headquarters, in Paris, in March 2006.

The salient points made in the statements as a whole are set out below:

- The importance of traditional sports and games (TSGs) in promoting cultural diversity and in protecting cultural identities at the local, national and international levels was strongly emphasized.
- A number of speakers underlined the role that culture in general and TSG in particular played in national, regional and international construction, in particular by fostering intercultural contacts and protecting the memory and the national cultural and sports heritage. It was stressed, in particular, that TSGs had a significant impact on national cohesion, by fostering, in particular, respect for the identity of communities from different cultural backgrounds.
- The educational dimension, notably the need to transmit knowledge, enhance understanding and disseminate and share information on the national, regional and international heritage of traditional sports and games, was strongly stressed as a fundamental component that contributed to the development and promotion of traditional sports and games among the young generations.
- The national experiences described highlighted the wealth of the heritage of TSGs, while underlining the need to strengthen or identify suitable modalities and mechanisms capable of ensuring their revitalization or vitality, as appropriate. In that respect, the need to compile inventories, both at the national level and beyond the national sphere, was considered to be a priority.
- Strong emphasis was laid on the need to share experiences and knowledge at the international level, in particular through the establishment at UNESCO of a website dedicated to the sharing of initiatives and the provision of a database on TSGs.
- The attention paid to TSGs in many countries should lead government and sports authorities to improve their place and role in the education process and in the promotion of the cultural heritage, with the assistance of the education system. However, the

strengthening of national TSG promotion and the development policies was also highlighted.

- The need for an approach going beyond specific characteristics was underlined as a means of strengthening cooperation and exchanges in order to develop and promote TSGs and to reflect similarities, points of convergence and differences better to foster discovery, tolerance and mutual respect in cultural diversity for peace among peoples.

ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

1. National sports authorities and national sport movements are encouraged to cooperate closer in promoting and developing TSGs, in particular through strategies on the incorporation of cultural components and TSGs into major sports events at the national level, for example during the opening ceremony of sports events, as a systematic cultural programme.
2. Each country is to initiate a National TSGs Festival with the support of the government and stakeholders concerned. Similarly, a World TSGs Festival is to be promoted among interested partners and Member States.
3. A national TSGs directory is to be initiated or improved in the light of national experiences, supported and evidenced by academic research and scientific data. It is strongly recommended that a common scientific methodology be established for all Member States in furtherance of transnational experiences and exchange. It is recommended that each country's Ministry of Sport establish a TSG website with the support of specialized national institutions or universities.
4. The representatives of governments endorse and support the establishment under the leadership of UNESCO of a "worldwide body on TSGs" to promote, develop, monitor and harmonize TSG efforts, actions and experiences with a view to ensuring cultural diversity for peace and development.
5. An ad hoc committee under the guidance of the UNESCO Secretariat with the support of ECOWAS and experts designated by the UNESCO Secretariat is entrusted with the task of finalizing as soon as possible the draft text on the mechanism and modalities of the "worldwide body on TSGs".
6. The representatives of governments express their deep gratitude to the Kazakh authorities, to UNESCO and the organizers for their support for the holding of the round table in Almaty.

Done at Almaty, November 2006