



UN WOMEN

**“Reducing sexual harassment and sexism
in the field of sports”**

Study Guide

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1. Welcoming Letter

Dear Delegates,

We welcome you to ArcMUN 2023! At this year's UN Women Committee, discussion will circle around the reduction of sexual harassment and sexism in the field of sports. Corruption in sport poses a range of gender-specific threats to girls and women, most notably in the form of sexual harassment and abuse by those in positions of authority. A growing number of cases are being reported or uncovered, and brought to the attention of authorities and the public.

Our goal is to discuss the issue at hand and exchange unique ideas, solutions and suggestions with all of you. As your committee chairs, we promise to make sure that each conference is interesting and organized. We will work hard to make sure everyone understands the parliamentary procedure and that the right to express every opinion is preserved and exercised. All delegates should have an understanding of their country's position and a will to make agreements.

We are looking forward to a fruitful debate!

Sincerely,

Alevridou Valia, Chair

Alexopoulou Ariadne, Chair

2. Introduction to the committee

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as UN Women, is a United Nations entity working for gender equality and the empowerment of women. It was established in July 2010 by the United Nations General Assembly. It merges and builds on the important work of four previously distinct parts of the UN system: the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

UN Women, among other issues, works for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls, the empowerment of women and the achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security.

The main roles of UN Women are:

- a) To support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms.
- b) To help Member States to implement these standards, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, and to forge effective partnerships with civil society.
- c) To hold the UN system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress.

3. Definition of key terms

Sexism is defined as prejudice or discrimination based on sex - especially against women - that is expressed through behavior, conditions, or attitudes that foster stereotypes of social roles based on sex.

Abuse implies that a person's rights are violated or infringed by another. This is based on an abuse of power and trust.

Sexual abuse is the forcing of undesired sexual behavior upon a person that is not sufficiently mature or cannot give their informed consent to engage in the act.

Sexual assault is defined as unwanted sexual contact. Sexual assault takes a variety of forms including attacks such as rape or attempted rape, as well as any unwanted sexual contact or threats. It occurs when there is lack of consent from one of the individuals involved.

Consent is given when a person voluntarily and willfully agrees to undertake an action that another person suggests. In the case of a sexual act, it must take place between two adults who are not incapacitated in any way. Consent may change, by being withdrawn, at any time during the sexual act.

Harassment relates to unwanted attention, the violation of dignity and/or the creation of a hostile, intimidating, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It is a much broader category than sexual abuse or sexual assault and can be further divided into three impermissible behavior categories:

- a. Sexual Coercion**, legally coined "quid pro quo harassment," meaning that conditions are dependent on sexual favors. Essentially, it involves obtaining consent from a person in such a way that their consent was given under pressure.
- b. Unwanted Attention**, the most common form of harassment, which comprises unwanted touching, hugging, kissing, etc. Unwanted sexual attention can even include sexual assault or rape.
- c. Gender Harassment**, which does not entail sexual advances but may include crude sexual terminology, images, or degrading comments, related to a person's gender.

Such behaviors may be verbal, non-verbal and/or physical:

- a. The examples of *verbal* harassment and abuse include unwanted or degrading intimate questions relating to body, clothes or one's private life, jokes with a sexual innuendo, and proposals or demands for sexual services or sexual relationships. These may also be in the form of unwanted and repeated communication, in any form, with a sexual content.
- b. The *non-verbal* examples of harassment and abuse include staring, gestures and showing pictures or objects with sexual allusions.
- c. The examples of *physical* harassment and abuse include unwanted, unnecessary or forced physical contact of a sexual nature.

4. Introduction to the topic

Building on these definitions, it is necessary to address the violation of human rights specifically within the environment of sport, expressed through sexual or sexualized conduct.

a. Sexism in the field of sports

The world of sport is plagued by many of the same gender inequalities that are more broadly noticed; issues such as unequal pay, gender-based violence, a lack of targeted investment and negative stereotypes and social norms.

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), sports coverage is hugely powerful in feeding into the narrative of women's sport being of lesser value and shaping norms and stereotypes about gender.

There continues to be an imbalance in the quality and quantity of sports coverage of female athletes compared to that of male. Outside the period of major sporting festivals, such as the Olympics, statistics claim that 40% of all sports participants are women, yet women's sports receive only around 4% of all sports media coverage. Organizers of sporting events tend to favor male athletes by scheduling them to compete at TV 'prime time' or at better venues.

In professional sports, better TV coverage generates higher revenues that impact player salaries and team resources dedicated to athletes, such as the number of medical

and performance staff. Notably, while gender pay gaps exist in most industries, UN Women has signaled that the sports industry has one of the largest gender pay gaps, with the exception of a small number of sports, such as tennis.

Moreover, it is well known that a low percent of sports broadcasters are female. The number of women who enter into sports journalism is still relatively low, and this particular area of reporting remains a predominantly male-dominated specialty in countries all over the world. Sportswomen are rarely treated as equals to their male counterparts and do not have the same opportunities and advantages as them in their shared field of work.

In their limited coverage, they are often objectified or demeaned by the media, which tend to represent them as women first and athletes second. Their coverage is often dominated by references to appearance, age or family life, whereas men are depicted as powerful, independent, dominating, and valued as athletes.

Social and cultural factors also contribute to women's underrepresentation in the governance of sport. A United Nations Development Programme and United Nations Development Fund for Women report noted that gendered responsibilities affect the ability of women and girls to participate in sport and other leisure activities. For example, in rural areas in different parts of the world, girls are responsible for time-consuming household chores, including fetching water, which leaves no time for participation in sport.

b. Sexual harassment in the field of sports

In several communities, it is not only discrimination, but gender-based violence that keeps women off the playing field. Recently, instances of violence and other forms of abuse have been more systematically brought to light within the sport community, even though general awareness of the issue grew during the 1980s and 1990s as a consequence of the initiatives for gender equity.

At an international level, it has been increasingly recognized in the resolutions of United Nations bodies that women and girls are frequently subjected to violence, including sexual harassment, at work and that they face increased risks of violence in particular contexts, such as when working in male-dominated workplaces. Furthermore, female athletes are pressured to conform to relative standards of the ideal body and

remain vulnerable to bullying and body shaming in a way that their male counterparts are not.

The International Olympic Committee issued a Consensus Statement in 2007 which reported that prevalence of sexual harassment and abuse appears to be higher in elite sport, noting that it can still happen in all sports and at all levels.

The primary perpetrators appear to be members of the athlete's entourage who are in positions of power and authority. According to Women Sport International, this can create a dynamic where the victim is unable to resist sexual advances, which are then escalated to the point where they may feel they have consented to the sexual activity and are responsible for it.

Given the gender distribution in sport, the offenders of sexual crimes are overwhelmingly male, and research has noted that the all-male, hyper-masculinist environments that are widespread within sport are particularly conducive to the exploitation of women and children. It is, however, noted that sexual exploitation affects both male and female athletes and can be perpetrated by both adult authority figures and by athletes themselves. Notwithstanding, besides an iota of studies, cases of sexual harassment among male athletes seem to be an under-researched area; there is also inadequate knowledge about same-sex female harassment.

5. Actions already taken

The Beijing Platform for Action was the first declaration from any UN Women's Conference to explicitly include statements concerning sport and physical activity. In 1994, the organization Women Sport International published the first information brochure on sexual harassment, which included guidelines for the prevention of sexual harassment and abuse in sport. Since then, a number of international organizations and political structures have developed directives on how to address the problem of sexual and gender harassment and abuse in sporting environments.

In 2016, UN Women provided the essential strategies for addressing violence against women to a diverse array of stakeholders at international, regional and country levels. The main principles and ethics presented were the following:

- a. The care of individuals through nurturing human well-being, and healthy and respectful relationships is the top priority.
- b. Putting women at greater risk unintentionally, reinforcing negative gender stereotypes or generating other discriminatory attitudes should be avoided.
- c. Mindfulness of how race, class, religion, sexual orientation and other identities impact on prevention and response efforts is requested.
- d. Prioritizing the safety, informed consent/autonomous decision-making and confidentiality of survivors is highly important.

What is more, in early 2022, the General Assembly of the United Nations welcomed the upcoming World Cup football championship in Qatar as the first such event to be held in the Middle East and emphasized that sport has an important role to play in the promotion of peace and development, respect for human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Encouraging gender equality in sport participation has also been advocated as a critical strategy to achieve the World Health Organization's global target of reducing physical inactivity by 15% by 2030.

In preventing sexism in sport, UN Women seeks to instill principles of respect, equality, non-discrimination and human rights and to promote the participation of women and girls in sport as athletes, coaches and role models in advertising and media, in order to challenge power imbalances and perceptions related to stereotypical gender roles. In controlling sexual harassment, our entity chooses to adopt codes of conduct that articulate zero-tolerance for non-accidental violence and harassment of any kind, clear reporting mechanisms, redress for survivors and hold perpetrators accountable.

Resources which have been developed by UN Women and partners to end violence against women and girls and implement the aforementioned strategies, include the following:

- a. The **International Olympic Committee**; The IOC established a 'Commission on Women and Sport' to tackle discrimination and violence, as well as to increase women's involvement in sport.
- b. The **Pakistani Right To Play program**; The evaluated Right To Play programme in Pakistan offers regular sport and play programming to over 170,000 children and youth in the country. As part of their programming, Right To Play has employed life skills in multiple districts across Sindh province. As a result, the confidence level of children, especially girls, in schools has

increased; violence and bullying in schools has been reduced; and essential life skills of children have been built.

- c. The **Women Win** fund; Over the course of two years, Women Win gathered a diverse set of experts, coaches, programme directors and girls from around the world and developed a guide for any individual or grassroots organization interested in building or improving sport programmes for girls, including teams, girls' and women's organizations, schools, clubs and faith-based groups. It can serve as a reference for coaches, international sports and development organizations, donors, sports governing bodies, caregivers, researchers, and policy makers.
- d. The **Coaching Boys Into Men** program; The evaluated CBIM programme provides a series of useful toolkits for coaches and institutions regarding how to promote values of respect and nonviolence in young men, challenging toxic masculinities which lead to violence against women and girls. The toolkits have been adapted for countries across the globe; and for sports such as cricket in India by Parivartan and soccer for 200 FIFA national football associations.
- e. The **One Win Leads To Another** program; UN Women, in partnership with the IOC, Women Win and the Brazilian Olympic Committee, with support from Procter and Gamble Always Brand and the Swedish Postcode Foundation, is implementing the Programme One Win Leads to Another. The Programme is aimed to promote sports and life skills training for adolescent girls, with a primary focus on utilizing sports role models to promote gender equality, including through educating men and boys – using mass media, social media, and community level interventions.

6. Conclusion

Stereotypes, discriminatory social norms and a lack of representation remain some of the most pervasive barriers to gender equality around the world. Even when

laws and policies are in place, deep-seated attitudes about gender roles can hold back substantive change. The sporting world needs to take action to end the culture of sexism, abuse of power and impunity that perpetuates violence within its ranks. Gender equity in sport should be centred on addressing discriminatory practices that undermine a significant shift in mindset across the entire sports ecosystem. Governments need to enhance the development and application of initiatives, policies and programs to tackle corruption in women's sport. These obstacles do not only affect professional athletes. They might also hold back girls and women around the world from embracing sport and reaping the full benefits of an active lifestyle.

7. Points to be addressed

- What role should governments assume in supporting equal pay of professional athletes and sportspeople?
- In which ways can education and educational programs reduce sexism in the field of sports?
- What can be done in order to create safe and supportive communities for victims of sexual harassment in the world of sport?
- Are there any differences in the ways men and women are most likely to report harassment?
- How can male athletes aid in supporting gender equality and tackling gender bias and stereotypes?

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