

Statement by European Commissioner Mariya Gabriel

Peace and Sport International Forum 2022, Monaco



*Since the days of ancient Greece, sport has long been about more than what is written on the scoreboard or what happens on the pitch. It is thousands of years since the tradition of the ‘Olympic Truce’ saw three kings in Greece suspend hostilities to allow athletes and spectators to travel safely to the Games and back. While the world may be unrecognisable, **the power of sport to unite, reconcile and inspire** remains undimmed.*

Under the leadership of H.S.H Prince Albert II, the Peace and Sport Forum is a clear demonstration of how sport is an answer for peace.

The European Union – as a project of peace and unity – draws on the universal language of sport as a powerful tool to foster positive values and to strengthen our communities. Sport, from grassroots amateurs all the way to elite, helps us to bridge barriers, cultures, and languages – and to promote our shared fundamental values and our commitment to peace.

*It remains central to the **European Sport Model** that underpins the work that we do and central to the way our societies are built. Sport is unrivalled in its ability to bring people together – whether to rally people around a common cause or to support those in their time of need.*

This year has been a poignant and stark reminder of that. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine caused millions to be displaced and countless communities torn apart. The determination, compassion and solidarity by people across the EU has been overwhelming. And the sporting world, from the governing bodies down to local clubs and

their members, has played an essential role in welcoming refugees and making them feel part of a community, here in Europe.

There are examples in the four corners of our Union that show the best of Europe and the best of sport, to collectively build communities from the ground up.

*This is why every year I host the **BeInclusive EU Sport Awards** which recognise and celebrate the power of sport to improve social inclusion for disadvantaged groups. That could be any group dealing with social challenges such as ethnic minorities, refugees, migrants, people with disabilities, vulnerable young people and others.*

***I am delighted that as part of that we now have a dedicated Sport for Peace Award to showcase projects that promote peace and European values.** And we will continue to support that work through our well-known Erasmus+ programme.*

Given the power of sport for peace and development, we also need to focus on making sport more accessible for more people. Our latest EU-wide survey shows that up to 45% of Europeans never exercise. This is down to a number of structural and social barriers which we must work to bring down – whether by making infrastructure more accessible or focusing on building a movement to inspire people to get active.

*In this spirit, I launched last year the **HealthyLifestyles4all initiative** – a grassroots movement to make access to sport and physical activity easier across society and generations. I am delighted that we now have over **80 pledges** from more than 25 countries, focusing on everything from sport in schools to improving coaching on mental health and social inclusion. And in this **European Year of Youth 2022**, our **Youth Ideas Labs** are a brilliant example of the power of youth to master great challenges with and through sport activities.*

Together, we must work to uphold the values of sport that we all hold so dear here in Europe, in Monaco and across the world. This is the precious work that the Peace and Sport Forum has done for many years, and I am particularly honoured to join you to reach this ambition, together.