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The International Day of Sport for Development and Peace.

Story Headline: IOC President Thomas Bach says the role sport plays in promoting peace is not to be underestimated.

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STORY SCRIPT
The role sport plays in fostering peace is not to be underestimated says IOC President Thomas Bach speaking ahead of the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace (IDSDP).

The third edition of IDSDP will be celebrated on April 6th and will aim to demonstrate the power of sport as a catalyst for peace and understanding, as IOC President Thomas Bach explains.

“This is an important day for the International Olympic Committee because it gives us the great opportunity to show the important role that sport plays in today’s society, even more so in the development of our society.

“Look at sports contribution to education or health, to international understanding and to peace, you cannot underestimate the important role sport and the Olympic Movement can play and this is why we appreciate this day so much and we are grateful to the United Nations General Assembly who has called for this day.”

Created by the UN and supported by the IOC, the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace is marked each year on the 6th of April by a host of social projects such as ‘Fight for Peace’ in the soon to be Olympic city of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil.
Fight for Peace uses boxing and martial arts combined with education and personal development to help individuals realise their potential despite being surrounded by crime, violence and social exclusion.

Started in the year 2000, the project received a grant from the IOC in 2013 and is also supported by the National Olympic Committee of Brazil.

The Olympic Games Rio 2016 embodies the UN notion of sport developing peace, with athletes from 206 National Olympic Committees not only coming together to compete but also living in harmony without discrimination within the Olympic Village – the true meaning of “Olympic Unity in Diversity”.

Whilst the athletes are yet to descend on Rio, the IOC’s support of initiatives such as Fight for Peace and the decision to create the Refugee Olympic Athletes (ROA) team by the Executive Board of the IOC on 2 March this year continues to emphasise the importance placed on sport as a force for developing peace.

Ana Caroline Belo is the Fight for Peace Open Access athlete Coordinator.

“On that day, the International Day of Peace, we think it's a day when everyone stops for a moment to think about their actions. What are people doing to keep that spirit of peace alive?

“Here, at Fight For Peace, we've organised a day with all the different sports, where we talked a bit and discussed this topic with the pupils; what initiatives, what they could do to keep that spirit alive.

“So, we believe that this day is important for everyone to reflect on their attitudes. Everything depends on other people’s attitude if they want to change their reality, if they want peace in their daily lives.”

One of those who wanted to change their reality through the power of sport was Jarde Lopes Da Silva, a boxer, who used the Fight for Peace initiative
to re-direct her life.

He said: “I behaved badly at school, as I was involved with illegal drugs. I didn’t behave very well at home. So, a friend of mine noticed that I was going off the rails a bit, and asked some of the people working here with social welfare to pay me a visit. Then she started giving me invitations, until the day that I came and visited the project here.”

It’s a view shared by Keyla Rosa who practices judo with the project.

“I wasn't doing anything. I was expelled from school after two and a bit years. I was just hanging around doing nothing. Then I heard about Fight For Peace. First, I did boxing here, for just over a year, then I started to come and have tutoring. Then I did my primary schooling. Now I'm doing secondary school; I'm coming to the end of it. It's really good for me. And now, I'm doing judo. I'm competing now and I really like it here.”

The athletes from Brazil’s Fight for Peace project provide real world examples of how sport can play a prominent role in the development of peace, echoing the sentiments of IOC President Thomas Bach ahead of the 6th of April, the third addition of the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace.

FACTS ABOUT FIGHT FOR PEACE
A recipient of an IOC Sport for All Award and grant in 2013, Fight for Peace is a non-governmental organization founded in 2000 and located in the favelas (Maré) in Rio de Janeiro – Host City to the Olympic Games in 2016. In partnership with the Brazilian Olympic Committee, the IOC supports Fight for Peace’s Maré Academy through its “Community Champions” project. Using boxing and martial arts combined with education and personal development, this project aims to realize the potential of young people and coaches in communities affected by crime, violence and social exclusion. Fight for Peace thereby provides young people with the tools, resilience and support structures they need to become life champions and create positive futures for themselves. In addition, workshops for
coaches from other low-income communities in Rio de Janeiro are held to teach them about the Olympic values.

During 2014 – the first year of the project – Fight for Peace had a total of 1,411 young people who participated in sports activities. In 2015, more than 3,000 young people participated in programmes at Fight for Peace Academies, collectively gaining a total of 371 medals across municipal, national and international competition. The number of young people enrolled in sports offered by Fight for Peace increased from 186 (January to March 2014) to 313 (in the same period in 2015); an increase of almost 70%. This increase was noted predominantly in the Olympic disciplines that are the focus of this project.

Raissa Souza de Lima, a judo athlete at Fight for Peace, is among those chosen to carry the Olympic Torch during the Rio 2016 Olympic Torch Relay and Roberto Custódio, a Fight for Peace and Brazilian National Team boxer, is striving to realise his dream of winning an Olympic medal.

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