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FORUM ON SPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Lillehammer, Norway, 12 February 1996

Statement by Ms. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme

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Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be with you in Lillehammer today, and to address this important Conference on Sport, Environment and Development.

We, in the United Nations Environment Programme, view the sporting industry to be a prime-mover in our common endeavour to achieve sustainable development. You have the technology. You have the know-how and the resources. But more than that you possess the entrepreneurial spirit to be innovative and, the vision to make the dream happen.

The popular misconception about environmental protection is that it costs money. But, in the vast majority of cases money spent to improve environmental performance has always brought a significant return on investment. There are dozens of areas where a green games approach to running events and facilities has saved or could save money. Money is also saved directly through reduced costs on energy, material inputs and waste disposal or in the form of lower insurance premiums, fewer accidents and avoided legal costs.

Environmental management is now synonymous with good business. In recent years, environment has emerged as a major investment opportunity. ^{The Journal} "The Economist" endorses this trend by saying "Caring for the environment, used to be a chore. It is now a marketing opportunity". Green consumerism has emerged as ^{one of} ~~among~~ the fastest growing segment of the consumer market. Corporations that develop and field products, including financial services and technologies which reduce pollution or promote environmental protection will acquire a competitive edge. This could prove to be true for the sporting industry as well.

Environmental considerations are here to stay. The public will not accept short-cuts on environmental protection. And for smart business paying attention to the environment is not merely an outward gesture of philanthropy or good citizenship.

The sports industry has an immense impact on the global environment. It is a multi-billion dollar industry. It provides employment to thousands. It purchases and consumes resources, produces consumer products, uses energy and water, generates solid and

liquid waste, and develops land. The ecological footprint of this industry cannot but be significant.

Thus, the message for sports organizations is that by organizing events, making products and providing services in a manner that is less environmentally harmful, not only ~~they~~ stand to save money, but also conserve the environment for future generations. The quest for a more sustainable form of sport is not an easy one. But persistence and hard work are not new to people in the sports community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The motto of the Olympic Games -- Altius, Citius, Fortius -- encompasses the rationale of all sports, which is to do something better than it has been done before.

The purest form of athletics, and sports in general, is to break through the limitations of what the body can accomplish. Yet, Olympians and professional sports ~~persons~~ ^{people} are not the only ones who strive to push performance beyond existing boundaries.

Every ~~person~~ ^{body is able} and has the right to rise a little higher, go a little faster and grow to be a little stronger. The joy of surpassing the limits of the body is open to all.

And this is the crux of the Sport and Environment programme of UNEP ⁽¹⁹⁾ to provide a healthy environment for all to function at their optimum level. The Programme has three overarching goals: to accelerate the greening of Olympic events and mega-sports events in general; to create new green teams and sports events in cooperation with other Sports Federations; to launch self-help youth sports and environment improvement projects around the world.

We are grateful to the Government of Norway for funding the services of a technical expert on sports and the environment in the United Nations Environment Programme, and to the International Olympic Committee for their unflagging support in helping us reach our shared goals. We very much look forward to our continued cooperation.