

Oral statement to be given at the Informal Minister meeting for ministers responsible for Sports in Vilnius, Lithuania, 1. October 2013.

Thank you for giving me the floor, Mr. President.

Major Sports Events is indeed an important topic. There are a number of interesting and relevant approaches which can be placed upon this theme. One of the topics you have mentioned in the discussion paper is the legacy of the sports events. When you consider legacy you are naturally not only looking into infrastructure but also the moral legacy which the major sports events will leave.

Mr. President, I am referring in particular to forthcoming major sport events. I, and others of this group of Member States, do trust that all the states organizing these events adhere to the Treaties on Human Rights, as well as the Olympic Charter, which forbid any discrimination.

Together with ministers from a number of other member states I have agreed upon a statement, which I will read to you shortly. It is our hope that you will be able to support the intention of the statement and that we at a later stage, as a follow-up, could prepare a joint written statement on this issue together.

The statement is the following:

"We, the ministers responsible for sport, from the following countries, in alphabetical order: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malta, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and Finland recognize the potential of sport as a universal language that contributes to educating people on the values of respect, diversity, tolerance and fairness and as a way of combatting all forms of discrimination and promote social inclusion for all. These values should be respected within the context of all sports.

In this context, we call upon all states that participate in organizing major sporting events, such as the Olympic Games, the Paralympic Games, World Championships and other major sports events to respect the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Charter of Fundamental Rights and to uphold their international commitments to non-discrimination, freedom of expression, freedom of association and assembly, in particular in the framework of the Council of Europe, to protect the enjoyment of these rights by all individuals, regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, disability, birth, sexual orientation or any other status. The European Union sees these human rights as universal and indivisible."

That was the statement. As I mentioned before, I hope that you can support the intentions. Thank you!