ISCA feedback to WHO on draft “Global action plan to promote physical activity”

Based on our review of the draft and a call for contributions among our 231 member organisations from all over the world, ISCA is happy to share our comments to the plan below.

The feedback is grouped in

1) Key, overall feedback points
2) More specific comments

We hope these comments can be of use, and look forward to a continued dialogue. In our sector, the draft plan will also be discussed at our global www.movecongress.com 4-6 October in Birmingham, UK.

1) Key, overall feedback points

- **We highly welcome the WHO initiative** and support the focus on cross-sector collaboration and action, as well as the planned process of consultation in preparation of the plan.

- **Civil society’s role has much too little emphasis.** There is a LOT on what Governments should do. There is some on what secretariat should do. And then an unclear category of “international and national partners” – with rather vague roles. Civil society offers a cost-effective, localised and permanent structure to deliver citizens-oriented physical activity without political or commercial interest. And it must be harnessed and supported. Civil society should be at the forefront of the action plan – as it - and particularly grassroots sport and recreational physical activity - is all about action. We recommend this be highlighted in the structure of the document. But it is also relevant in the action parts of the plan, for instance Action 1.2, #62, where member states’ role is recommended to be implementing community events. Knowing governments have limited reach and capacity in implementing community events, this calls for clever collaboration between relevant stakeholders with interest and capacity to run activities. We would strongly underline the important role member states should play to support civil society and grassroots sport organisations as they deliver physical activity events and grassroots sport training opportunities on a daily basis. This could be implemented throughout many of the recommendations for member states – indeed the role to support and finance research is, for comparison, mentioned in recommendation 152.

- We support the work to link the physical activity efforts to the Sustainable Development Goals. We would argue that physical activity has a clear, standalone human rights dimension too – and that this should be highlighted because it will enhance the political discussion and give priority to physical activity. We call it: The Human Right to MOVE (see for example our upcoming MOVE Congress www.movecongress.com in Birmingham on 4-6 October (note: this is different and more specific compared to the Human Right to Health, as mentioned in point 47)).

- **Sport has great potential to promote physical activity.** But we should understand that this is not primarily in professional sport, sport spectator events (or football specifically for that matter) – it is in grassroots sport and recreational physical activity. We also wonder why sport’s role for “national character and value” is important in this context? And why mention UNOSDP as it is now closing? Indeed, a shift in sport policy towards participation is needed – we welcome that message entirely. As for recommendation 56, we find that using sport events to promote physical activity may be relevant and possible (although the promises of mega sport events to enhance citizen participation most often fail) but it likely is an only indirect and inefficient at best (or potentially directly counter-productive) way to promote physical activity: If the goal is to promote participation – we recommend to invest resources in that, not in spectator sport events.

- We would recommend using even more the power of the good example and good practice in the document – and beyond. The many practitioners out there are likely more inspired by that than any
theoretical-only construct or solution. ISCA has in fact been developing several such “good practice collections” for physical activity promotion, see e.g. Women in Sport http://womeninsport.isca.org/ and are happy to do so also going forward.

- The role of the WHO secretariat is described in multiple instances to be developing guidelines, manuals, menus of options, case studies, etc. We would like to question, firstly, if such information and guidance is actually what is needed (given that a plethora of manuals and good practices already exists in this field, and since we are not sure that lack of such tools is actually the primary barrier) and secondly if the secretariat is foreseen to have the resources to actually deliver the many proposed items. We would instead recommend that the secretariat is recommended to liaise (more) with relevant international stakeholders, not least civil society ones, to deliver coordination, collaboration, shared use and promotion of existing resources. We at ISCA would be strongly interested in such a collaboration, while of course respecting that the main stakeholders for WHO remain member states.

- ISCA has been delivering and developing its international physical activity campaign NowWeMOVE (www.nowwemove.com) since 2012, and with substantial results. For instance, the flagship initiative MOVE Week delivered 7125 events engaging 1.8 million individual citizens in the European edition in 2015, and 7674 events in Latin America in 2016, with the 2017 edition starting on 23 September. Other initiatives of the NowWeMOVE Campaign are increasing in popularity and include No Elevators Day, European School Sport Day (with our partner Hungarian School Sport Federation), Flash MOVE, etc. ISCA is happy to take on its role as promoter of good practice, advocacy, collaboration and action, including with NowWeMOVE, as a part of the activation of the WHO Global Action Plan.

2) More specific comments

- We feel that the positive effects on mental health as a result of physical activity are not standing out as clearly as they can.
- Why is “dance” a stand-alone activity group? While a great activity, we feel it is well-encompassed by active recreation and sport.
- P6-7 point 23: We would recommend to also mention ourselves in International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA) as an example of a relevant international sport-oriented body. The sport sector and in particular the grassroots sport sector is very diverse, and it would seem biased if only the IOC initiatives and IOC supported bodies are mentioned as examples, given the fact that the main orientation of the IOC is to organize the elite sport event Olympic games.
- Vision (#45) – are countries the main actors to promote PA? Could we use “stakeholders” instead? See also above on the role of civil society.
- Goal (#46) – we find the use of a concrete number to be highly relevant politically speaking. In fact, ISCA itself proposed “100 million more Europeans to be active by 2020” when we launched our NowWeMOVE campaign in 2012. We understand the link to the 10% target – but would still argue that an even higher ambition is needed to drive political change.
- On the indicators: There seems to be a high focus on measuring on the implementation by country (e.g. “X% of countries have implemented a communication campaign …”). We believe that countries are highly relevant actors but recommend that indicators should go more beyond country level and look at eg cities, initiatives, campaigns more generally.
- Indicator 53, IV. We feel that this indicator is so loosely related to Physical activity that it should be omitted.
- Action 58: We would feel that it is appropriate to mention ISCAS NowWeMOVE Campaign (www.nowwemove.com) as one of the examples here. On several parameters it is likely the most comprehensive international physical activity campaign to date. NowWeMOVE could also be mentioned in action 61, and in 170, for instance the No Elevators Day campaign is relevant here. It seems to us that omitting the NowWeMOVE campaign would make the document rather incomplete in terms of using relevant examples.
- Action 107, indicator V: We find that a precise definition is needed to make this (otherwise most relevant) indicator useful.
- The very different levels of abstraction in the recommendations can seem confusing at times. Eg recommendation 133 is so generic that it may be less useful, while 134 is so specific that one might
question why this is particularly highlighted as a recommendation (eg balance training for older people could be argued to be as relevant as muscular strength).

- Recommendation 138, first bullet. We recommend that also social media be suggested as a key tool for communication campaigns, as well as outdoor marketing.
- Action 4.4 on strengthening financial mechanisms: We recommend that the health sector itself allocates a fixed proportion of health care costs to health promotion and health prevention, including physical activity (such proportions are only recommended for transport funds, and taxation of unhealthy foods).
- Regarding the glossary: We do not understand why the use of motorized vehicles should be included in the definition of active recreation. And the definition of Mass-reach communication mentions tobacco use, probably in error.

Copenhagen, 22 September 2017
/Jacob Schouenborg