

# Women and sport

**F**rom 28 to 30 November, Abidjan, the capital of Côte d'Ivoire, played host to the first regional seminar on women and sport for the French- and Portuguese-speaking African National Olympic Committees, organized by the IOC advancement of women section in collaboration with the Côte d'Ivoire NOC.

The opening ceremony was presided over by the Côte d'Ivoire minister for Youth and Sport, Sigidé Soumahoro, and attended by Louis Guirandou N'Diaye, member of the IOC and president of the NOC, Lassana Palenfo, president of the African judo confederation, Gabriel Lohoury, president of the African volleyball confederation and several local figures. The seminar brought together representatives from 29 NOCs, working in sport at a national level for inter- and non-governmental organizations. The IOC was represented by Fékrou Kidane, director of international cooperation and communications, Katia Mascagni Stivachtis, head of the advancement of women section and Nicole Girard-Savoy, project manager at Olympic Solidarity.

In his speech, the minister emphasized that "sport as a phenomenon can no

## Regional seminar

on women  
and sport in Africa

longer be seen as limited to a certain set of countries, nor to a social class, and even less so to one gender (...). The idea of this theme is to break with some old prejudices, rooted in sociocultural and religious issues". He added that "sport thus becomes an integrating force, an instrument for raising the standard of education and for helping as many people as possible to develop their personalities and take on their responsibilities. (...) For them [women], it is a question of taking their rightful place in this field". Minister Soumahoro accordingly promised to take into account the recommendations proposed during this seminar for improving the promotion of women's sport in Côte d'Ivoire.

Louis Guirandou N'Diaye mentioned that "the right to play sport goes hand in hand with the right to education, the right to health, the right to security, in short with human rights in general" and that "the taboos and main cultural and psychological problems which they face are not insurmountable for women. (...) The fact that we are discussing them in itself represents a first step towards a solution".

In a message to the participants, Anita L. Defrantz, vice-president of the IOC and chair of the "Women and Sport" working group, pointed out that "although women's position in society and in sport mainly depends on the social, political, economic and cultural context in which they live, it is essential that all sports organizations and all people responsible for physical activities and sport strive to provide women with the same opportunities as men enjoy in sport".

Various problems linked to the participation of women in sport were tackled over three days. The discussions and presentations which took place provided the delegates with an opportunity to exchange their own personal experiences and to familiarize themselves with aid and training programmes which they can benefit from through the Olympic Movement as well as with the government structures responsible for sport in their own countries. Further to the discussions, a series of recommendations was adopted by the participants (see inset) with a view to encouraging sport governing bodies to



Group photo with Minister Sigidé Soumahoro (centre) and (on his right) IOC member Louis Guirandou N'Diaye, Katia Mascagni Stivachtis and Nicole Girard-Savoy.

increase their support for the promotion of female participation in sport in Africa.

It is evident that the dynamism of the delegates contributed to the success

of this seminar, which highlighted, once more, the will and the capacity of African women to work for the development of national and international sport. It is now up to the Olympic

movement and national governments to give them the means to achieve their objectives.

Katia Mascagni Stivachtis

## Resolution

The participants,

**Congratulating** the International Olympic Committee on having taken the initiative to organize a regional seminar on women and sport for the French- and Portuguese-speaking National Olympic Committees of Africa;

**Recalling** that the aim of the Olympic Movement is to build a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal, based on the principle of gender equality;

**Recalling** the decision of the International Olympic Committee to require that by the year 2000 all National Olympic Committees and International sports Federations fill a minimum of 10% of the positions on their decision-making bodies with women, and that this percentage rise to 20% in the year 2005;

**Recalling** the conventions and legal instruments adopted by international organizations requiring the elimination of discrimination against women, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Platform for Action of the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, the International Charter of Physical Education and Sport, the Brighton Declaration and the Windhoek Gall to Action:

**Recognizing** that physical and sports education at school is an essential, determining factor in the development of physical activity and sport

**Emphasizing** that physical and sports activity is fundamental to ensuring the

well-being and the physical and mental health of the entire population, and of women in particular;

**Aware** of the economic, cultural and structural difficulties that often place sport after other priorities;

**Emphasizing** the difficulties involved in gaining access to and publicizing information among members of the Olympic Movement and the inter- and non-governmental organizations responsible for physical activity and sport;

**Recalling** that African women play an essential role in the structure of the family and in children's education;

**Considering** the will expressed by the participants to endeavour to secure greater participation of women in the Olympic and sports movements;

**Urge** the International Olympic Committee, the National and International Sports Federation, the African Sports Confederations, the African National Olympic Committees, the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa (ANOCA) and the Association of African Sports Confederations (AASC) to implement action programmes favouring the promotion and participation of women in sport;

**Request** governments, and in particular Ministries for Youth and Sport, Education, Health, Promotion of Women and the Family, along with intergovernmental, regional and international organizations, particularly the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa (SCSA), the Conference of ministers of youth and

sports in French-speaking countries (CONFEJES), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to implement or reinforce policies for the promotion and development of the role of women in physical education and sport, to enable them to express themselves at all levels:

**Urge** the various partners in charge of physical activity and sport to concretize their cooperation and consultation through the creation of national forums dealing with women and sport;

**Request** the various partners to allow women to benefit from specific training programmes for athletes, coaches, leaders, administrators, sports physicians and journalists at national, regional and international level;

**Insist upon** the development of physical education and sports teaching and an improved status for physical education and sport-related occupations;

**Encourage** organizations responsible for physical activity and sport to cooperate with associations involved in the promotion of women;

**Hope** that women's sport will enjoy wider and more appropriate coverage by the media;

**Commit themselves** to promoting the above ideas, participating in the actions undertaken and working toward promoting the role of women in sport.

Abidjan, 30 November 1998.