



**REVIVING TRADITIONAL SPORTS**

## ***THE FINAL DECLARATION OF THE 5<sup>th</sup> ETHNOSPORT FORUM 5-6 MARCH 2022, BAKU***

The 5<sup>th</sup> Ethnosport Forum was held on 5-6 March 2022 in Baku, Azerbaijan. The Forum had participants from over 45 countries. Among the participants that honored the Forum were esteemed Ministers of Youth and Sports, as well as 20 institutional members of the World Ethnosport Confederation (WEC).

The Forum commenced with the opening speech of Mr. Farid Gayibov, Minister of Youth and Sport of Azerbaijan. Mr. Gayibov welcomed all participants to Azerbaijan and the Forum, and expressed Azerbaijan's interest in hosting sports events, including ethnosport.

The next keynote speech was delivered by Mr. Necmeddin Bilal Erdoğan, President of WEC. Mr. Erdoğan welcomed all participants to the event and to Baku, which he labeled as one of world's most ancient heritage cities. Mr. Erdoğan stressed the four pillars upon which WEC is established: peace, solidarity, respect, and tradition. He also noted that these principles are direly needed by the world in the currently troubled times. Emphasizing the uniting and collaborative potential of these values, Mr. Erdoğan expressed how they can help us with eliminating threats to humanity: each society's culture needs to be treated as unique and valuable; no culture should ignore another culture or try to eliminate it; and we should embrace a colorful world rather than a monicolor world. Reviving traditional sports through consultation and joint wisdom can help increase respect for tradition and culture; protect local identities; and also help protect other components of cultural heritage, such as handicrafts. Mr. Erdoğan also noted recent achievements of WEC, recounting the encyclopedia of traditional sports that is underway, as well as the PhD and research support programs that have already commenced and the ongoing establishment of research centers in universities across the world. In his closing remarks, Mr. Erdoğan thanked His Excellency İlham Aliyev, the President of Azerbaijan, Mr. Farid Gayibov, The Mister of Youth and Sports of Azerbaijan, and participants coming from over 45 countries and extended his cordial invitation for the 6<sup>th</sup> Ethnosport Forum to be held next year in Turkey.

The third keynote speech was delivered by the Secretary General of the Organization of Turkic States, Mr. Baghdad Amreyev. Mr. Amreyev noted that sports and youth policy are key concerns of his Organization, which were also the theme of the summit held by the Organization in 2018. Mr. Amreyev called for continuation of the cooperative and fruitful dialogue between WEC and the Organization, which share common aspirations and have co-signed a cooperation

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agreement. Mr. Amreyev noted that the World Nomad Games in 2022 will be held in September in the Turkish town of İznik, which exemplifies continuation of an initiative that began in Kyrgyzstan in a different nation and therefore is a good example of cooperation and collaboration. Mr. Amreyev finally noted that the Organization undertakes forums, camps, training, and games and welcomes new ideas in the spirit for reviving traditional sports.

The final keynote speech was given by Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, the Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlement Program (UN-HABITAT). Ms. Sharif expressed her delight for being in Baku, which she labeled as one of world's cross-roads and thanked His Excellency İlham Aliyev and the government of Azerbaijan for the opportunity. Ms. Sharif noted that cultural identity expressed in traditional sports can be a force for good. In this vein, she noted that the youth should understand where they come from, develop empathy for others, and refocus on the future in order to deal with our troubled times. Resilience rooted in cultural identity can be developed with the help of engagement traditional sports. In this regard, Ms. Sharif proposed that we should work more with communities and the local government to generate an enabling environment and also engage and empower the community, by organizing events like ethnosport activities. Ms. Sharif also noted that UN-HABITAT is ready to work with WEC and develop programs together for the healthy development of young people by giving them public spaces that they can call their own.

The Forum progressed to host a high-level ministerial panel followed by three roundtable discussions.

High-level ministerial panel was chaired by Mr. Necmeddin Bilal Erdoğan, and there were esteemed participants from Turkey, Mexico, Gambia, and Niger. The panel discussion centered around how traditional sports can increase international collaboration as well as local institutional initiatives and achievements of the countries represented by the panelists. Panelists noted the importance of international networks and initiatives. Mr. Erdoğan recounted the regional committees of WEC established for Central Asian, Eastern European and Western African countries. Panelists also mentioned other multi-country cooperation and networking initiatives. With regards to local achievements, participants noted undertaking of infrastructural investments, enactment of laws and regulations, standardization of traditional sport rules, commercialization drives, change in school curricula, organization of traditional sports festivals, communication and promotion activities, injunction of traditional sports into regular camping programs, and establishment of designated clubs and federations for traditional sports. Panel discussions revealed that there is growing interest in traditional sports across nations and also development of greater capacity ranging from physical facilities to designated rules and regulations.

Roundtable discussions generated fruitful ideas regarding revival of traditional sports and games. These ideas revolved around sponsorship, spreading and diversifying traditional sports awards, branding and finally use of social media.

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## **Increasing Sponsorship**

Participants pointed to the need for and the importance of continued sponsorship for traditional sports and games. The government is considered as the prime supporter of traditional sports and games, not only through monetary means but also in other conducive ways, such as passing regulations, developing curricula, and supporting research. However, participants stressed that greater sections of the government should be considered as potential supporters and sponsors of ethnosport. Not only the ministries of sports and culture but also ministries of education, health, and tourism should be invited to take part and contribute. Among other sources of support, participants should consider universities, foundations, local governments, and corporations. Corporations from the tourism sector and the health care sector are especially considered important partners. Cultural tourism has been on the rise and traditional sports and games connect well with this rising industry. Also, health care stretches to the wellbeing of the mind as well as the body. Traditional sports can contribute to both and therefore draw interest from the health care sector too. Also mentioned are international organizations such as UNESCO that has an interest in the protection of universal heritage and UN-HABITAT which tries to endow large sections of the disadvantaged people with access to shelter and social spaces.

## **Spreading and Diversifying Traditional Sports Awards and Increasing Athletes' Motivation**

Participants emphasized the importance of education, academic degrees, training programs, researching, identifying, and rewarding best practices, as well as employing the elderly as role models for the youth to spread information about traditional sports and motivate the young generation. Education and training are useful means for passing the knowledge as well as standardizing practices ensuring the implementation is true to their original character. Thus, training and education programs are important for protecting the authenticity of traditional sports. Academic degrees, such as PhDs, and academic research are also important for uncovering new information and blending existing ones to support diversification. Rewards for the best practices can instill strong motivation. Hence, rewards should be given not only to winners of the games but also to academic researchers, trainers, and coaches for superior performance in their respective fields. Engagement of the elderly in the practice and dissemination of traditional sports knowledge is important because the elderly are the typical role models for young people. Participants also warned against monetary rewards that may contradict the true essence and authenticity of traditional sports and proposed that motivation should be intrinsic, based on values that underpin traditional sports, rather than extrinsic.

## **Branding**

Branding of ethnosport emerged as an important aspect of its revival. Brands establish links between the branded object and its consumers or enthusiasts. Participants noted that effective brands are what people tell one another as interesting or meaningful. Thus, greater research in

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marketing and the psychology of consumers or enthusiasts of ethnosport are warranted. Participants produced creative ideas as to how young people could be enticed, such as the production of slogans that young people can use to convey their ideas, feelings, or identity and their sense of self-belonging.

## **Use of Social Media**

Participants of roundtable discussions stressed the importance of social media for promoting and diffusing ethnosport. Social media carries the potential of raising awareness, educating, and bonding. Participants recommend the use of multiple channels, such as dedicated YouTube channels, blogs, or TikTok accounts, and making use of hashtags. Content development, marketing, and human psychology are deemed indispensable in order to make good use of social media capabilities. Thus, ethnosport can be promoted by people who are competent in the use of social media and competent in the management of strategic affairs, and therefore requires focused interdisciplinary research. Participants also stressed the conjuring of opportunities for users of social media to help them generate content and spread the word. Coopting popular sports commentators and other well-known people have also emerged as extra tools for maximizing the returns from the use of social media.

The Forum ended with the celebration of its immense successes over the past several years and those that are to come in the near future. In the past few years traditional sports and games have risen in status and now are an important element of sports administrators' agenda. Modern sports' dominance is now less intimidating and we strongly believe we can challenge the dominant logic, agenda, and practices of modern sports, which have historically pushed traditional ones into the periphery and brought them to the verge of being forgotten. Revival of traditional sports can now help us pass our cultural values to new generations with greater confidence. We believe preserving tradition is not possible without reviving it. What has not been revived cannot be preserved. Thus, WEC's efforts are crucial for the continuation of our long-lasting values.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Forum's participants laid out elements of the roadmap that can guide our actions in the future: internationalization, professionalization, branding, and social networking. Internalization involves complementing national revival efforts with international dialogue and collaboration. Professionalization entails the creation of standards and their inculcation through formal training and academic research. Branding is a central marketing activity that can instill traditional sports and games, or ethnosport as a catchword and as a unique signifier of important cultural values. Finally, social networking is reaching out to potential practitioners and audiences by means of information technologies as well as traditional media. This roadmap is best served by a triple helix of non-governmental organizations, the government, and the public sector all working together, synergistically for accomplishing the mission of reviving traditional sports and games.

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In this spirit, the WEC invites all participants, academicians, and experts to contribute to the Encyclopedia of Traditional Sports and Games that is on its way and to encourage and nominate researchers for its Ph.D. scholarship program.

The Forum's participants salute the world with the WEC's foundational values of peace, solidarity, respect, and tradition.

It is the WEC's pleasure to announce that the 6<sup>th</sup> Ethnosport Forum will be held in 2023 in Türkiye.

