



REVIVING TRADITIONAL SPORTS

THE FINAL DECLARATION OF THE 6TH ETHNOSPORT FORUM 16-18 FEBRUARY 2024, ANTALYA, TÜRKIYE

The 6th Ethnosport Forum was held on 16-18 February 2024 in Antalya, Türkiye. The Forum had participants from 60 countries, 30 of which are institutional members of the World Ethnosport Confederation. Among the participants that honored the Forum were esteemed Ministers of Youth, Sports, and Culture as well as government officials, representatives from national federations, researchers, and academics.

The Forum commenced with the welcome message of His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the President of the Turkish Republic. His excellency remarked the current crises and conflicts that threaten peace and stability across the world, especially drawing attention to the tragedy in Gaza, which is right across Antalya. Mr. Erdoğan emphasized the important role that ethnosports can play in fostering peace, trust, and stability, especially at times of conflict.

The opening speech was delivered by Mr. Necmeddin Bilal Erdoğan, the President of the World Ethnosport Confederation. Mr. Erdoğan welcomed the participants to Antalya, one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Mr. Erdoğan noted that the forum planned for last year was postponed due to the earthquakes that struck the southern regions of Türkiye. As a response to the earthquake, an important mission was undertaken by the World Ethnosport Confederation in the region. The Confederation helped thousands of families meet their shelter needs. The Confederation also provided families and children with activities and exhibited great examples of solidarity. Mr. Erdoğan thanked the friendly countries for their support to the earthquake victims.

Mr. Erdoğan also indicated that the fora and festivals all over the world show that our excitement regarding traditional sports and games is on the rise. There is now greater motivation to keep the traditions and values of different societies alive. Mr. Erdoğan expressed his happiness to see every color of the world that participated the recent events carried out in locations ranging from Japan to Argentina.

Mr. Erdoğan reemphasized the importance of mutual respect, peace, and solidarity, which are stronger than wars and the pains they engender. Noting the unacceptable massacres in Gaza, Mr. Erdoğan called for greater support for saving human dignity.

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Mr. Erdoğan concluded his opening speech by introducing the new logo of the World Ethnosport Confederation. The Confederation switches to a new logo that signifies a vision of more dynamic move upwards and forwards.

The second opening speech was given by H.E. Mr. Osman Aşkın Bak, the Minister of Youth and Sports of Türkiye. Mr. Bak welcomed the participants to the tourism capital of Türkiye, Antalya. Mr. Bak expressed his Ministry's endorsement of the vision of the World Ethnosport Confederation and cited the Ministry's investments in the development of traditional sports and games, especially ethnosports facilities, to support their dissemination and sustainability. Mr. Bak concluded his speech by thanking the participant countries for their support after the devastating earthquakes.

The main theme of this year's meeting was integration of traditional sports and games into education systems, especially higher education. Traditional sports and games have been on the rise as a reputable world-wide institution. Nevertheless, more needs to be done to make traditional sports and games an essential and integral part of social life through education. Integration with education systems is considered as a central mechanism for creating, codifying, and disseminating knowledge about traditional sports and games. Such integrative efforts will foster capable institutions, expert practitioners, and rich practices by different societal strata all over the world.

In recent years, there has been considerable progress regarding incorporation of traditional sports and games into university curricula. Additional steps need to be taken to ensure that traditional sports and games penetrate deeper into educational curricula and structures. Traditional sports and games, like other useful forms of games, can inspire learning from primary to tertiary to lifelong education. Hence, we need to rethink ethnosports in view of their pedagogical utility and find creative ways of generating educational content and methods to teach them. We also need to train educators and instructors who are at the same time competent and leading practitioners of traditional sports and games.

There is also need for new departments, faculties, or graduate schools that specialize in traditional sports and games. These entities should be recognized as reputable academic units and be able to grant degrees concerning traditional sports and games. Thus, traditional sports and games need to become a unique academic track with dedicated personnel.

While specialized faculties or schools in universities are a step forward, we also need to ensure that traditional sports and games are taken up by history, psychology, sociology, tourism, and other disciplines as well. Ethnosports have roots and functions that can be fully unearthed and codified through contributions from multiple disciplines.

The Forum also hosted two high-level ministerial panels followed by three roundtable discussions.



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The high-level ministerial panels were chaired by Mr. Necmeddin Bilal Erdoğan. The themes of these panels were “Ethnosport in national education: Curricula, initiatives and approaches to bring traditional sport and games to schools”. The initiatives and approaches aim at challenging uniformization in music, sports, dressing, dancing, and aesthetics driven by Western values. Panelists were Sports and Youth Ministers from Namibia, Russian Federation, Uzbekistan, Sierra Leone, Chad, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, and Guinea. Ministers emphasized the importance of traditional sports and games for bonding, socialization, teaching of respect and empathy, and entertainment. The Ministers also featured ethnosports as a bridge connecting national cultural heritage with the education systems. They also recounted their efforts at supporting and preserving traditional sports and games as one of the core missions of the state. The Ministers noted the need for working with NGOs and other enthusiasts, securing political support, and establishing designated federations. The Minister from the Russian Federation kindly expressed their willingness to host the next year’s World Ethnosport Forum in the Russian Federation, for which Mr. Necmeddin Bilal Erdoğan expressed his sincere gratitude.

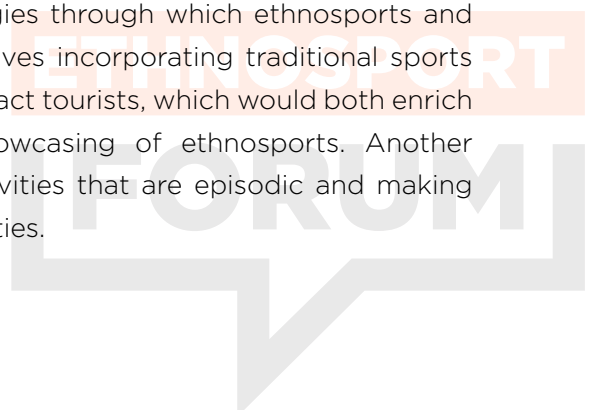
The roundtable discussions addressed the following topics:

- Cultural tourism as a channel to promote traditional sports and games: “Ethnosports Tourism”
- Increasing the participation of women in traditional sports and games as athletes, decisionmakers, and practitioners
- Codification and standardization of traditional sports and games for international competitions.

Cultural Tourism and Traditional Sports and Games

There is a strong two-way connection between cultural tourism and ethnosports. Traditional sports and games generate new avenues for cultural tourism, as they represent a central component of the shared memory and heritage of societies. Also, cultural tourism holds the potential for increasing awareness of and participation in traditional sports and games. Traditional sports and games can be combined and promoted with a wider package of cultural aspects encompassing ethno-music, ethno-cuisine, and ethno-dress.

The discussants suggested a variety of ways and strategies through which ethnosports and cultural tourism can be integrated. One suggestion involves incorporating traditional sports and games into festivals and other cultural events that attract tourists, which would both enrich these activities and make them conduits for the showcasing of ethnosports. Another suggestion involves going beyond festivals or other activities that are episodic and making ethnosports an integrative part of ongoing touristic activities.



Inviting tourists as active participants rather than as passive viewers of traditional sports and games can be an effective way of making ethnosports a key aspect of cultural tourism. Active participation involves a more intense experience of local culture and tradition and may be a more satisfying form of cultural tourism.

Through integration of traditional sports and games with cultural tourism, ethnosports can become an important driver of sustainable development. Recognition of economic as well as social and cultural functions of ethnosports can further contribute to its sustainability. Ethnosports is not simply a longing for the past but it is a key element of the future of our culture, economy, and society.

Increasing the Participation of Women

Many sports branches, including traditional sports and games, are dominated by men. The inclusive potential of traditional sports and games cannot be realized without greater integration of women.

Participants suggested uncovering and disseminating more information regarding traditional sports and games practiced by women. Making these sports and games more accessible for women, raising awareness in the society, using adequate incentive systems, applying quotas for women, conducting scientific research on physical requirements of traditional sports and games, and showcasing successful female practitioners as role models can help women show more interest in traditional sports and games. Training girls and women about traditional sports and games through courses, workshops, and mentoring programs can be helpful with regards to their empowerment. Training can increase the confidence of women and motivate them towards greater participation in traditional sports and games.

Another strategy for women's inclusion in traditional sports and games is to invite them into governing bodies at all levels, ranging from the ministerial position to the practitioner level. Participants expressed their delight in the presence of female ministers of sports and youth in the Forum, yet desire greater participation at all levels.

Codification and Standardization

Codification and standardization are key aspects of institutionalization, which is a main requirement for the sustainability of traditional sports and games. Various steps have been taken in this respect. One important endeavor is the Encyclopedia of Traditional Sports and Games. With the help of academics and practitioners, codification of traditional sports and games from seven regions of the world is under way. The digitalized Encyclopedia will be continuously updated, freely accessible and readily translatable into multiple languages.

The discussants noted that more needs to be done especially with respect to clarification of the pillars of codification and standardization. As resources at the country-level are still scarce for many countries, participants ask the World Ethnosport Confederation to take greater initiative for codification and standardization, such as establishment of an international steering and legal counseling committees. Even though some countries have made strides into codification of their particular traditional sports and games, many countries still need the guidance of the Confederation as a higher-level authority. Countries can also learn from each other's experiences.

Participants also noted an important potential threat posed by codification and standardization: decontextualizing ethnosports. Codification and standardization should proceed carefully, with a view towards revealing and preserving the richness of the knowledge of traditional sports and games. They should not eliminate variance in their labels, meaning and significance across locations and social groups, which contribute significantly to their authenticity. Countries should carefully evaluate and negotiate how much standardization will take place across countries.

The forum emphasizes traditional sports and games as important components of humanity's common heritage, which should be passed onto future generations. Ensuring sustainability of traditional sports and games is central to instituting values of diversity, respect, peace, and solidarity.

Participants wish to make the world a more colorful and peaceful place through traditional sports and games.