



United Nations Development Programme

Communications Office

# PRESS RELEASE

## **African Cup of Nations Soccer Matches To Rally Fans Against Poverty, AIDS**

### ***Soccer Officials Team With UNDP To Promote Millennium Development Goals***

**Tunis, 21 January 2004** □ In a partnership among soccer stars, soccer officials and a UN agency, organizers of the [African Cup of Nations](#) tournament plan to use the high-profile games in Tunisia from 24 January to 14 February to promote a growing “Africa 2015” campaign against poverty and the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Billboards in the five stadiums hosting the games, jerseys worn by 170 ball boys, declarations by prominent speakers at the opening ceremony and the presentation of a giant banner to the President of Tunisia all will be employed in the effort, following decisions by the African Football Confederation, the Organizing Committee of the African Cup of Nations and top Tunisian officials to join in the Africa 2015 campaign, an initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The aim of the Africa 2015 campaign is to mobilize popular participation in the global drive to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, a set of eight time-bound, measurable goals adopted by all member countries of the United Nations at the Millennium Summit in 2000. The goals include halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS before 2015.

“Achieving the Millennium Development Goals is nowhere more imperative or urgent than in Africa,” said UNDP Associate Administrator Zéphirin Diabré. “But it is not the responsibility of governments alone. Everyone can and must contribute. We congratulate the African Football Confederation, the Organizing Committee, national football federations and African players who have decided to make the commitment, and we hope that many others will join the *Africa 2015* team,” he added.

The Africa 2015 campaign uses the Millennium Development Goal on HIV/AIDS, an especially high priority for Africa, as an entry point to raise awareness about the other Goals. The eight Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by 2015, constituting a roadmap for humanity set by the international community for the beginning of the 21st century, include: rolling back extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and developing a global partnership for development. The latter Goal embodies a two-way compact between the wealthier countries of the North and the developing countries of the South, in which the wealthier countries have pledged fairer trade, debt relief, technology transfer and increased development assistance to those developing countries that, for their part, institute effective pro-poor policies and governance reforms.

Today, almost one African in two lives in poverty, three-quarters of the 40 million people in the world who are HIV-positive are found in Africa, and in over 15 African countries, per capita income has fallen below levels of 10 years ago.

According to Issa Hayatou, President of the African Football Confederation, “of course, all of African football will use its extraordinary ability to communicate in the service of these goals, which are vital for Africa.”

Africa 2015 billboards will be displayed in the African Cup of Nations 2004 stadiums with the slogans “With Africa against poverty” and “For an AIDS-free generation.” These slogans will be seen in Arabic, English and French on the jerseys of the 170 ball boys who will be present in the stadiums during the competition. A giant banner (7.0 metres x 2.5 metres) carrying the joint African Football Confederation and UNDP appeal “With Africa against poverty”—and bearing signatures of the top officials of African and world football, who signed it at the previous African Cup of Nations in Mali, as well as signatures of all the players on the national teams in that competition—will be unfurled at the stadium in Tunis during the opening ceremony, and will be carried onto the field at halftime of the first game featuring Tunisia against Rwanda.

After the opening ceremony, a replica of the banner will be presented to Tunisian highest authorities. This “passing of the torch” will be shown on a screen in the stadium. For its part, the city of Tunis has facilitated the display of “Africa 2015” banners and posters of UNDP Goodwill Ambassadors Ronaldo and Zidane, who support the efforts of African football to combat poverty and AIDS. The British Broadcasting Corporation and Radio France Internationale, who are helping to promote the Millennium Development Goals, are associated with the “Africa 2015” initiative.

Well before the opening of the African Cup of Nations, the participating national teams have set the tone by carrying out a broad range of activities. In each country, players have committed themselves to the “Africa 2015” movement at public ceremonies, including government officials and national football federations -- calling on the people, businesses and institutions to take action on local priorities so that the Millennium Development Goals will be achieved by 2015. In most countries of sub-Saharan Africa with a high incidence of HIV/AIDS, the players have signed a “pledge” to protect themselves and others in all circumstances against HIV transmission.

The President of the Organizing Committee of the African Cup of Nations, Mr. Slim Chiboub, said the Committee “will spare no effort to support the Millennium Development Goals and the Africa 2015 initiative.”

“Africa 2015” is a pan-African movement, launched by UNDP, relying on famous artists, singers and musicians from all over the continent, as well as sports champions, filmmakers, writers, journalists, various religious authorities and numerous municipal officials, aimed at promoting the Millennium Development Goals. “Africa 2015” belongs to all those who want to add their energy and creativity to the global drive to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

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