

Dear colleagues, Good morning,

First of all I would like to thank you for your presence and for inviting me, on behalf of the Catalan Women's Institute, at this Conference which its main objectives are, as you know, to promote and disseminate research, teaching and innovation on women and sport. We are all here in order to meet and share experiences and good practices related to women and sport.

As you know, in November 2003, UN resolution was adopted which called on governments to incorporate sport in the political agenda and to see sport as a tool to promote education, health, development and peace.

Sport, beyond leisure and competitions, is an essential element on achieving those objectives included in development and people's welfare: it encourages the improvement of public health, it promotes tolerance and social inclusion, it favors economic investments and creates job opportunities, and lastly, it is a tool for promoting peace and respect for democracy.

Today, men and women have achieved legal equality in terms of sport, so in sport's world there is no law or regulation prohibiting or discriminating women just because they are women. Indeed, today, sport is seen as a right of all citizens. In this sense, we have overcome –and so far–, all those thoughts that kept away women from sport: they were banned from the leisure sport activities and they were considered non suitable for competitive sport.

However, we must not forget, that when we talk about sports, we are talking about a social and cultural process that helps to create the roles of masculine and the feminine.

Thus, women play leisure sport less than men do and they are nearly invisible in the highly competitive sport. The media do an unequal echo – in quantity and in treatment- of the competitions depending on the sex of the competitors. Concerning responsibility and decision-making positions in Catalonia, for example, the federations do not even boast a 30% of women.

That is why we are here today, because we know that intentional actions are needed to encourage a change in the world of sport; in other words, it is necessary to introduce a gender perspective in sport policies. Nevertheless the goal should not be to include women and girls to a traditional male model or reverse; ie, to introduce boys and men to the called feminine sports or sports for girls and women. Our goal should be that everyone feels comfortable playing sports: to have a sport for each person, and one person for each sport.

Playing sports is synonymous to wellness, therefore it should not refuse sexual differences or make them invisible, rather make them positive in order that women and men could enjoy practicing sport on equal opportunities and with the same recognition.

To conclude my speech, I would like to say that we have to consider how to introduce the gender perspective in sport but we have to take also into account that sport can help to achieve the objectives proposed for this methodology. We also should understand sport from a positive point of view, we have to see what can be improved but also how can sport contribute to build a more egalitarian world. So, how can sport help or improve gender equality? Obviously there are areas where sport can promote it and, from my point of view, rights and empowerment are two really good examples. Sport offers women and girls access to public spaces, where they can gather, develop new skills and share experiences. Moreover it can also serve to obtain support from others and enjoy freedom of expression and movement, far away from gender stereotypes. We do not have to forget that sport is a way of social participation which can promote education, improve communication, negotiation skills and leadership or in other words: sport can improve women's empowerment which is essential for the welfare of people.

In the name of the Government of Catalonia, we encourage you to continue in the path towards to equality, highway that we all have to walk together.

Thank you.