



International
Olympic
Committee

The President

High-Level Meeting on Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health

New York, 25 September 2025

President of General Assembly,
Secretary-General,
President of the Economic and Social Council,
Director-General of the World Health Organization,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Physical inactivity is a major risk factor for non-communicable diseases. Our bodies — and our minds — are made to move. But today, too many people around the world are not moving enough. The scale of the challenge is alarming: 80 per cent of adolescents, and one in three adults are not doing enough physical activity.

I would say today in this room, thanks to all the security, we have probably all walked quite a bit this week, so congratulations. But the challenge is to keep it up.

If we continue on this path, we face 500 million new cases of preventable disease by 2030. This is a crisis that costs lives — and billions of dollars in healthcare. In times of limited resources, we must invest in what works. And sport works.

At a young age, I was diagnosed with asthma and my parents did not want to put me on to the number of drugs that had been recommended. We went to another doctor who suggested swimming. And it worked. It taught me how to control my breathing. It taught me how to grow my lung capacity. And I never had to go on the level of dosage that was previously recommended when I was 2 years old. So sport works.

Physical activity is one of the most effective low-cost, high-impact solutions we have to prevent disease but also to support mental health.

Every step, every game, every movement saves lives — and saves money. Physical inactivity already costs healthcare systems an estimated 27 billion dollars every year to treat NCDs .

Studies show that every dollar invested in sport and physical activity can deliver a fourfold return in health and economic benefits — from lower healthcare costs to longer, healthier lives. In other words, investing in sport is a long-term investment in a stronger, more resilient community.

This multiplier effect is being recognised. For example, development banks worldwide have pledged 10 billion dollars by 2030 for sport and sustainable development projects. Their commitment reflects a growing recognition that investing in sport can generate ripple effects — not only for health, but also for education, inclusion, youth empowerment, and more.

This is why, together with the World Health Organization, the International Olympic Committee launched an annual global campaign called Let's Move. It is simple. It is to bring everyone, everywhere to be a little bit more active in their daily lives. Just as we have done this week. And it works. Last year alone, more than 500 million people joined in — young and old, families and friends, coming together to simply move, to play, to run, to work out and exercise.

Let's Move is more than a campaign. It is our call to action. Through our partnerships with National Olympic Committees, UN agencies, NGOs and community organisations, we are bringing sport to where everyone is.

The IOC and the sport community are working to bring sport and health closer together: by training healthcare workers, making sport more accessible for physical and mental well-being and promoting campaigns that inspire more people to move.

To make a real impact, we need to work together — governments, civil society, and the private sector — guided by the WHO's Global Action Plan on Physical Activity.

This High-Level Meeting is about a new commitment for action on NCDs and mental health. We have the chance to make a real difference. I therefore applaud the Member States' increased recognition of physical activity and sport's contribution in the Political Declaration which will be adopted in a few minutes.

It is time to make physical activity and sport a systematic part of health, education, social, and urban policies. We need to back this with real funding to turn words into action against NCDs. Physical activity is a low-cost, high-impact investment in public health. Let's give people everywhere the chance to move, to play, and to live healthier lives.

The Olympic motto is Faster, Higher, Stronger – Together. It reminds us that progress only happens when we move — and when we move together.

So let's move for health. Let's move for a better future.