

Network to Further Women in Sport Holds Inaugural Meeting at ITTF Headquarters

A 'Think Tank' to help promote the presence of women in sport held its first meeting at the offices of the International Table Tennis Federation in Lausanne, Switzerland on Friday 1st September 2006.

The informal meeting was as a direct result of the International Working Group for Women and Sport which met in Kumamoto, Japan in May 2006, where the theme was 'A Commitment to Collaboration'.

Lilamani de Soysa, the ITTF Project Manager and Brigitte Zuffrey from the International Motorcycling Federation, were both present in Japan and as a result initiated the gathering in Lausanne.

"One of the aims of this group will be to help promote the development of the presence of women in the world of sport", said Lilamani de Soysa. "This will be done through education and through lobbying various institutions such as the International Olympic Committee, the city of Lausanne and other international and sport federations."

Guest Speaker

Guest speaker at the inaugural meeting was Dr June Canavan who owns a medical sport clinic in Australia and is currently studying for her doctorate at the International Academy of Sport Science and Technology in Lausanne.

"Sport is the password to the world, never be stopped from spreading the word; this group can change the world of women in sport", she said "Work together, women and men to make sport better." The comment underlined the theme of the meeting in Kumamoto. "Having a strong commitment to collaboration and having female contacts in each federation is very important", she continued. "Moral and ethics first in everything we do, no compromise with this."

Moving Forward

Ways of improving the seminar, encouraging other international federations to participate plus a debate on clothing and the cultural barriers that women have to overcome in this respect, formed the basis of discussions.

In addition, Lilamani de Soysa and Brigitte Zufferey explained the items discussed at the International Working Group for Women and Sport which met in Kumamoto, a meeting where the ITTF Project Manager had led a very successful workshop entitled: 'Sport as a Tool for Peace and Development'.

Aim Through

The seminar in Lausanne concluded with members agreeing that a prime aim is to attract more representatives from international federations to join the group; every participant committed themselves to bring a colleague from another international federation to the next meeting.

Furthermore, the idea forwarded by Brigitte Zufferey, that the group should meet when there are major sporting events in the region was well received, whilst Lilamani de Soysa advised that she would present the seminar to the next meeting of International Federation Directors at the Maison du Sport in Lausanne.

A meeting which had started with Chuck Hoey, the ITTF Museum Curator, giving the group a guided tour of the ITTF Museum finished in social style with Lilamani de Soysa providing a Sri Lankan curry dinner in the gardens of the ITTF Château, a gesture appreciated by all.



Group members in the gardens of the ITTF Château in Lausanne: (Left to right) Habiba Besic (ITTF), June Canavan (Guest Speaker), Jeanne Zhang (ITTF), Ann Gripper (UCI), Francine Viret-Bernal Bureau de l'égalité), Magali Louis (AISTS), Lilamani de Soysa (ITTF), Etsuko Enami (ITTF)
Photo by Brigette Zufferey (FIM)

UCI – Union Cycliste Internationale
Bureau de l'égalité deals with harassment of any kind at the work place
AISTS - the International Academy of Sport Science and Technology
FIM – Federation Internationale de Motocyclisme

Supplied by: Ian Marshall, ITTF Publications Editor