IAAF NEWS

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ATHLETICS FEDERATIONS

N.78
Published on www.iaaf.org -
February 28, 2006

Humanitarian initiatives show that Athletics has a heart

As I write this message, we are just about to begin the 2006 IAAF World Athletics Series, and after seeing so many World Records set indoors already this winter, I am confident that we will have excellent competitions when we go to Moscow for the 11th edition of the IAAF World Indoor Championships (10 – 12 March). Two weeks later, we will then be in Asia, for the 34th IAAF World Cross Country Championships in Fukuoka, Japan (1 – 2 April), for what is the first of a number of top athletics events scheduled for that continent in the next few years.

But although competition will always remain the lifeblood of the IAAF's activities, I am also pleased that our association is starting to involve itself in a number of humanitarian activities. For me, our great sport of athletics is a tremendous source of life-enhancing values and experiences, whose influence extends far beyond the boundaries of our competition venues. Athletics has the power to change lives, and I believe that the IAAF has a responsibility to harness this energy, with the support of our Member Federations and athletes.

When I was at the Winter Olympic Games in Turin, I signed an agreement with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), on behalf of the IAAF, to co-operate on ways to promote environmental awareness by incorporating environmental issues and monitoring environmental programmes in the preparation and staging of IAAF competitions.

The IAAF and UNEP have agreed to work together to create mechanisms for the transfer of knowledge between competition organisers, particularly in developing countries. In particular, the two organisations will begin a programme called the "Plant for the Planet Campaign", by which Trees of Peace will be planted in and around sporting facilities. The focus of the first phase of this project will be on conflict-affected countries.

Just a month earlier, the IAAF's "Athletics for a Better World" project came to a climax with the first ever on-line auction of Athlete memorabilia. Thanks to the kindness of 50 star athletes, both active and retired, as well as the generosity of our fans, we were able to raise more than $30,000 to be shared equally between the UN organisations FAO, UNICEF and WFP.

On behalf of the IAAF, I would like to thank all those who contributed to the success of this online auction, whose aim was to raise money and particularly increase public awareness for UN humanitarian causes.

Lamine Diack
IAAF President

Photo: Lamine Diack with the Executive Director of UNEP Klaus Töepfer