



Représentation du Royaume de Belgique  
auprès de l'OSCE

**Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting  
"Combating Racism, Intolerance and Discrimination  
in Society through Sport"  
Vienna, 19-20 april 2012**

**Statement by the Belgian delegation**

**Session II:**

**"Monitoring, Preventing and Responding to Hate Crimes, Racist Incidents, Intolerance and Discrimination, including in Sports"**

Mr. Chairperson,

As in so many countries around the world, football is the most popular sport in Belgium. Thousands of people come together every weekend to play or watch the game. Unfortunately, at all levels of the game, from amateur to international, we sometimes witness incidents of racism and discrimination.

Therefore the Belgian Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism has, for over 10 years now, been working closely with the Royal Belgian Football Association. Through various advertisement campaigns, players of the Belgian national team have been advocating tolerance and non-discrimination and asking their supporters to give racism a red card.

In 2006 the awareness-raising campaign "don't behave like a monkey" was launched, aimed at banning racism from the football stadiums. The campaign complemented a circular note sent out by the Minister of the Interior. The note contains concrete and detailed guidelines on how to deal with abusive, racist and discriminatory remarks and chants during football games, and targets all actors involved: law enforcement agencies, club officials, supporter associations and referees.

The Ministerial guidelines set out clearly when certain behaviour becomes intolerable and gives concrete examples of this. It advises clubs on how to use their internal regulations, stewards and stadiumspeakers in tackling expressions of racism during games. An incremental approach is put forward, starting with awareness raising activities, and via interventions by stewards and if need be law enforcement, leading to the possible interruption of a game by referees, when racist behaviour persists. The Minister also instructed law enforcement agencies to define, together with the clubs, the practical modalities for their cooperation in banning racism from the stadiums.

Since 2006 action continues, recently the Belgian Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with supporters' associations and civil society organisations,

launched a new team: "Respect United". The team is made up of 11 Ambassadors of the sport, including coaches, players, referees and officials. Their goal is to win supporters that stand behind the 11 values they promote, these include:

- In sport, what you achieve as a team is more than the sum of its parts.
- We are committed to respond to any form of discrimination and every expression of it and to command respect.
- And, the whole football world strives to set an example on how to deal positively with diversity in society

Through "Respect United" footballers, coaches, referees, officials and parents say that they see diversity as enrichment, as an opportunity. They call attention to all forms of diversity, not only respect for people with a different origin and culture, but also for LGBT people, people in poverty, respect for age differences and equality between men and women.

Further information on the "Respect United" initiative is available on the website: [www.respectunited.be](http://www.respectunited.be)

Thank you for your attention.

