

Cape Town, 28 February 2025

JOINT DECLARATION OF THE COALITION SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SPORT

The Coalition of Sustainable development through Sport (hereafter the Coalition), chaired by ICSC with the support of AFD and JICA, was launched under the leadership of Public Development Banks (PDBs) in November 2020 in close collaboration with a selection of partner organisations ([here](#)).

Gathered in Cape Town for the fifth edition of the FiCS in Cape Town, co-hosted by the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the Coalition published the following statement.

Progress

Transitioning from recognition to acknowledgment

There was an important shift in the global policy dialogue on sport in sustainable development in 2024 with clear progress from “recognition” of sport as an enabler of sustainable development to “acknowledgement” of the need for concrete investment, made at scale and in a sustainable manner.

The Paris Summit on Sport for Sustainable Development (#S4SD), hosted by International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach and French President Emmanuel Macron on the eve of the Olympic Games Paris 2024, was a landmark event in this regard. The Summit saw over 60 world leaders and leaders of international organizations support the [Paris Agreement for Sport and Sustainable Development](#), which sets out 10 key commitments on enhancing the role of sport in supporting education and employment, health and nutrition, equality and inclusion, environmental sustainability and event legacy, and, critically, financing and impact measurement.¹

Building on this momentum, in October the G7 Development Ministers Meeting adopted the Pescara Declaration on Sustainable Investment in the Sport “ecosystem”, encouraging further investment in this area and welcoming the engagement of an increasing number of public development banks and financing stakeholders to mobilise quality investments to foster sport as an enabler of sustainable development.²

First FiCS Sport Investment Forum

Committing to mobilise further financing to realise the significant potential of sports as an enabler, a growing number of Public Development Banks (PDBs) have incorporated sports-related themes and financing instruments into their strategies to enhance the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this context, the inaugural FiCS Sport Investment Forum was held at the Sport, Arts and Culture Arena as part of the fifth edition of the FiCS from February 26-28, 2025.

¹ Paris Summit on Sport for Sustainable Development, (2024). [Agreement](#). Online.

² G7 Italia, (2024). [G7 Development Ministers' Meeting Pescara 22-24 October 2024 Communiqué](#). Online.

The FiCS Sport Investment Forum convened PDBs, international organizations, government officials and key stakeholders from the sports ecosystem, who emphasized the **importance of further strengthening investment and financing for sports as a catalyst for social, economic and environmental advancement**, particularly in alignment with the Paris Agreement.

Building on the success of the Sport for Sustainable Development Summit (#Sport4SD), the Sport impact forum hosted a High-Level Session “Sport for sustainable Development”. Major announcements underscored actionable commitments and strategic initiatives, focusing on the **transformative impact of sports on education, gender equality, and inclusion, as well as innovative funding mechanisms for financing sports development, human capital development through sport and leveraging the legacy of major sporting events**. The session **highlighted Africa’s critical role as an emerging center in the global sports and financial landscape**, showcasing the continent’s vibrant sporting and political agenda. Follow-up thematic sessions further explored these initiatives’ operational and practical dimensions.

The FiCS Sport Investment Forum included also three thematic sessions:

Thematic session 1 focused on **sport, urban development, and infrastructure investment**. It raised awareness about the impact and return on investment of hosting major sporting events, enhancing urban sporting infrastructure and promoting community sports as a contributor to social and economic inclusion in cities and urban areas. The session showcased **successful practices from development banks and public authorities that have integrated sports into urban development strategies** and discussed opportunities for development financing institutions to support inclusive growth through investment in sports infrastructure and community programs.

Thematic session 2 addressed **innovative funding instruments for sports development**. It introduced the vision and structure of the **Global Sport Impact Fund** and illustrated achieved results in developing a shared investment methodology for sports. The session underscored the private sector’s role in funding sports development projects and highlighted innovative financing vehicles connecting sports and sustainable development, while presenting a pipeline of bankable infrastructure projects.

The break-out session 3 examined the **impact of sports on education, gender equality, and inclusion**. It emphasized sports as a tool for fostering equality and human capital development, particularly for marginalized groups. The session shared a high-impact initiative enhancing access to education and employment, showcased **effective impact measurement practices**, and underscored the **importance of evidence-based advocacy and capacity-building through research, knowledge sharing and training programs**. It also stressed the need to address gaps of evidence on the economic and social returns of sport and physical education.

Moving forward

The sequence of events and meetings attended by the Coalition during the Summit, including the plenary session on 28 February before the Summit’s closing ceremony, outlined a clear path forward. The focus was on **two projects** and a **roadmap** to keep the international finance agenda centered on them.

Global Sport Impact Fund

At the Sport for Sustainable Development Summit (July 2024) and the G7 Declaration in Pescara (October 2024), the Coalition emphasized the potential of a **Global Sport Impact Fund** for sport for development, with three key objectives: i) Assess how to mobilize public and private financial resources, ensuring investments contribute to measurable sustainable development outcomes; ii) Conduct a pre-feasibility study to confirm the fund’s relevance by identifying financing gaps and opportunities in the sector; and iii) Fine-tuning recommendations on the fund’s structure, governance, investment strategy, and suitable financial instruments.

This exercise will lay the groundwork for deeper study, analyzing demand and providing detailed legal and operational recommendations for the fund.

Research Umbrella framework

Sport, despite being a cost-effective approach to social challenges, remains underfunded. To increase investment, **stakeholders need more evidence on the social and economic return of investing in sport**. The Paris 2024 Agreement's 9th commitment links investment to research, emphasizing the connection between impact measurement and instruments like the Global Sport Impact Fund. Similarly, the G7's Pescara Declaration and the Finance in Common Coalition urge public development banks (PDBs) to scale investment in sport-for-development research. **The research agenda aims to further strengthen evidence for sport's role in achieving social outcomes**, guiding policymaking and investment decisions, and tapping into the growing impact investment market.

The research agenda aims to optimize knowledge sharing and research on the social and -economic impact of sport through i) making existing knowledge available to support advocacy ii) setting common standards for terminology, concepts and methodologies ; iii) addressing research gaps through new research projects and data gathering iv) evaluating financial instruments and identifying good practice.

The Finance in Common Summit served as a platform to launch the research agenda. UNESCO presented an initial compendium of knowledge products, pointing to research gaps and potential priorities for a harmonized research agenda for PDBs. A key goal is to gain PDBs' endorsement for the agenda and commit to aligning research efforts with it. UNESCO, in collaboration with CAF and the other Coalition's members, in a second phase, will implement and promote the agenda, including: i) Mapping stakeholders, identifying experts, and analyzing best practices; ii) Developing a funding strategy for integrating research into financial instruments like the Global Sport Impact Fund; iii) Establishing a research pipeline and expert roster, and iii) Setting up a governance mechanism and ethical data-sharing policies

Key milestones include a closed-door expert meeting to validate the research pipeline, a presentation at the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development in Seville (2025), and the presentation at the Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport (CIGEPS) in September 2025, marking the formal start of the research agenda's implementation.

Roadmap

The coalition members continue to work on the framework for investing USD 10 billion, at domestic and international level, in community-based, inclusive and sustainable sports infrastructure and human capital development projects by 2030 This requires a similar pathway to that of 2024, which is why the Coalition will be committed to maintaining a high level of interest in Sport in the most important international fora, thanks also to the presence in the Coalition of supporting organisations such as IOC, UNESCO and OECD. In this sense, the Coalition is determined to present the state of play at international events and Summits, and at the highest level leveraging the leadership role of Italy and Senegal as hosts of the Milano-Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games and Youth Olympic Games Dakar 2026 respectively, and the role of host of other major Sport events.

Invitation to other Public Development Banks to join the Coalition

The Coalition, both during the Coalition open door plenary meeting and during the Sport Impact Investment Forum, extended the invitation to other PDBs to become members of the Coalition, in an attempt to consolidate the important achievements of the last two years. This is with the aim of maintaining high regard on the part of political authorities, international organisations and PDBs for the potential of sport as a factor in sustainable development.