

WORLD CUP DIPLOMACY SUMMIT

4 - 5 JUNE 2026

Convened in alignment with the United Nations' broader agenda on Sport for Development and Peace, highlighting the role of sport as a catalyst for international diplomacy. The Summit will bring together senior policymakers, diplomats, and experts to engage in dialogue on the FIFA World Cup 2026 and its global diplomatic and developmental dimensions.

A Global Dialogue

Location: The United Nations Headquarters,
405 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10017

AGENDA

Thursday, 4 June from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

- Welcome address strategic vision
- Keynote plenary sessions
- Evening reception and dinner

Friday, 5 June 2026 from 9:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

- Interactive working groups
- Live drafting of the Sport Diplomacy White Paper endorsed by UNITAR



unitar
United Nations Institute for Training and Research





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4 - 5 June 2026, New York



CONCEPT NOTE

World Cup Diplomacy Summit 2026 - A Global Dialogue

Background

The World Cup Diplomacy Summit 2026 highlights the critical role of global dialogue among Member States, diplomats, and sports stakeholders in both the public and private sectors in driving sustainable sport innovation, governance, and inclusive growth.

Sports have long served as a platform for diplomatic engagement, dialogue, and peacebuilding, while also contributing to economic growth, infrastructure development, and technology. In today's interconnected and rapidly changing world, sport continues to offer a unique space for addressing shared global challenges and fostering collaboration across borders.

Mega sporting events like the FIFA World Cup play a powerful role in bringing together people from diverse backgrounds. They strengthen international understanding and create opportunities to advance sustainable development, inclusive fan engagement, and long-term legacy through sport.

Convening one week prior to the FIFA World Cup 2026, this Summit aligns with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly:

SDG 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth

Exploring how mega sporting events can generate economic opportunities, stimulate the broader sport economy, and enhance operational productivity through the responsible use of AI and data for sustainable, inclusive, and forward-looking sport development.

SDG 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Exploring lessons learned and best practices on how sport creates impact in infrastructure and smart venues, highlighting its potential as a diplomatic and development tool.



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SDG 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities

Driving sustainable urban livelihoods, cities, and communities beyond the stadium through the legacy of mega sporting events.

SDG 12. Responsible Consumption and Production

Encouraging responsible business practices, sustainable monetisation, and innovative approaches to fan engagement and operations in sport.

SDG 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Strengthening accountable governance, integrity, and sport's contribution to peace, justice, and international cooperation.

SDG 17. Partnerships for the Goals

Fostering partnerships among public, private, and civil society actors to advance shared policy goals and sustainable impact in sport.

Through the lens of the FIFA World Cup 2026, the Summit will examine how football can serve as a platform for diplomacy, sustainable development, and innovation. It will explore how stakeholders across sport, policy, business, and technology can work together to address emerging challenges. It will also examine how mega sporting events can be leveraged to drive inclusive growth and international cooperation.



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Objectives

- To strengthen cross-sector dialogue and foster partnerships among participants, with a view to leveraging the FIFA World Cup 2026 in promoting sustainable development, global dialogue, and international cooperation through sport.
- To enhance participant understanding of emerging trends and challenges across sport, diplomacy, and technology.
- To capture key insights, case studies, and good practices to inform the development of a White Paper by the end of the Summit.
- To produce a collaborative Sport Diplomacy White Paper endorsed by UNITAR and the Pledge signatories, highlighting the key shared principles, priorities, and commitments.
- To establish thematic multi-stakeholder working groups with defined focus areas for continued collaboration beyond the Summit.
- To define next steps and a clear roadmap for implementing the Summit's Pledge and establishing long-lasting stakeholder engagement beyond the FIFA World Cup 2026.



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Key Themes

- Football and Global Diplomacy as an Enabler of Dialogue Between Nations
- From Mega-Event to Sustainable Impact: Legacy, Infrastructure and Community Development
- Leveraging Artificial Intelligence, Data for Performance and Strategic Fan Engagement in Sport
- Integration and Policy Challenges: A Holistic Approach to Sport, Diplomacy, Fan Engagement and Artificial Intelligence

Event Format

Day one will open with high-level welcome remarks from UNITAR, the United Nations sport diplomacy representatives, and the fellow coordinating partners, the VSI Executive Education, UREKA Education Group and Shoosmiths. It sets the stage for discussions on sport as a driver for diplomacy and international cooperation. This will be followed by three plenary sessions exploring football as a platform for international dialogue, the long-term legacy & community impact of mega sporting events, and the growing role of artificial intelligence in performance, governance and fan engagement. The day will conclude with an evening reception and dinner, providing participants with opportunities for informal exchange, alongside keynote reflections on football's global responsibility.

Day two will shift toward applied dialogue and collaborative output. The programme will begin with keynote case studies followed by a facilitated synthesis session led by Shoosmiths' legal & governance experts to identify key policy challenges and align cross-sector perspectives. This process grounds discussions in real-world perspectives, enabling participants to identify shared challenges and shape coherent, forward-looking insights and action points on the future of sport.

Participants will then engage in moderated breakout workshops across four thematic areas, focusing on developing practical recommendations and shared commitments. The event will conclude with report-back sessions and a live drafting process of a UNITAR Sport Diplomacy White Paper.



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Expected Outcomes

- Strengthened cross-sector partnerships, dialogue, and a structured network for long-lasting stakeholder engagement in sport, advancing sustainable development and shared goals beyond the Summit.
- The development of thematic frameworks across sport diplomacy, legacy and infrastructure, fan engagement, and artificial intelligence, with actionable recommendations and stakeholder roles.
- A consolidated overview of key challenges and trade-offs in governance, ethics, and commercialisation to support more coherent and inclusive sport-sector decisions.
- Concrete stakeholder commitments and the establishment of multi-stakeholder working groups to advance community development and sustainable sport practices beyond the Summit.
- The collection and dissemination of good practices and case studies on sport diplomacy, sustainable infrastructure, and responsible use of technology in sport.
- A structured roadmap for a Sport Diplomacy White Paper endorsed by UNITAR.