

WORLD CUP DIPLOMACY SUMMIT 2026

A Global Dialogue

United Nations Headquarters, New York

4-5 June 2026

PARTNERS



VSI

World Cup Diplomacy Summit 2026

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United Nations Headquarters, New York | 4-5 June 2026

DAY 1 | 4 June 2026

OPENING | 09:00 - 10:45

09:00 Arrival and Registration

09:30 Welcome Coffee

10:00 Welcome Addresses

Rabih El-Haddad, Director, Division for Multilateral Diplomacy & UNITAR's New York Office

Robert Skinner, Chief of Partnerships & Global Engagement, UNDG

10:15 Summit Overview

Mazin Khan (UNITAR), Marçal Jané (UNITAR), Tony Faulkner (VSI Executive Education), Andrew McIntyre (VSI Executive Education), Rand Alkhusman (Ureka Education Group), Richard Millington (Shoosmiths)

10:30 Keynote Address

H.E. Ms. Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani, Permanent Representative of Qatar to the UN and Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Sport for Development and Peace

PLENARY SESSION 1 | 10:45 - 12:30

Football & Global Diplomacy as an Enabler of Dialogue Between Nations

Theme I: Sport as a Convening Platform

Moderator: Simon Rofe, Professor of Sports Diplomacy, Leeds Beckett University

Speakers:

- **H.E. Abdulaziz Al-Wasel, Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the UN**
- **H.E. Ahmed Arafa, Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the UN**
- **H.E. Ignacio de Cossio, Former El Salvador Ambassador**
- **Stephen Reynard, Global Head of Sport, UNHCR**
- **Ashleigh Huffman, Aspen Sport Institute**

Theme II: Sport as Soft Power & Nation Branding

Speakers:

- **David Grevemberg, Games Delivery Executive, Deloitte**
- **David Francis, Vice President, Jetr+ Global Sports**
- **Lindsay Krasnoff, Clinical Professor, NYU**
- **Adam Beissel, Associate Professor, Miami University**

Audience Reflections & Summary

Lunch Break | 12:30 - 13:30

DAY 1 | 4 June 2026 (continued)

PLENARY SESSION 2 | 13:30 - 16:00

From Mega-Event to Sustainable Impact: Legacy, Infrastructure and Community Development

Theme I: Urban Development & Community Sport

Opening: Andrew McIntyre, VSI Executive Education

Moderator: Ludovic Dau, Sports and Programmes Director, Peace & Sport

Speakers:

- **Ernesto Lucena, Former Minister of Sport of Colombia**
- **Arnaud Amouroux, Programme Officer, UN Cyprus**
- **Cody Damon, Sports Envoy, WorldBoston**
- **Lluis Rabaneda, Vice-President, International Canoe Federation**

Audience Reflections

Coffee Break | 14:30 - 15:00

Theme II: Grassroots Participation & Future Pathways

Speakers:

- **Didier Drogba, Vice-President, Peace & Sport (video message)**
- **Stephen Reynard, Global Head of Sport, UNHCR**
- **Andrew McGarty, Senior Global Director of Football Marketing, New Balance**

Audience Reflections & Summary

PLENARY SESSION 3 | 16:00 - 18:00

Leveraging AI, Data for Performance and Strategic Fan Engagement in Sport

Theme I: AI & Data for Performance and Commercial Value

Moderator: David Grevemberg, Games Delivery Executive, Deloitte

Speaker: Brian Taylor, Hudl

Theme II: Strategic Foresight & Governance of AI

Speakers:

- **Gavin Price, Director, UK / Europe Sports Diplomacy Alliance**
- **Guido Battaglia, Head of Partnerships, CSHR**

Day One Reflections & Wrap-Up

Moderated by David Grevemberg (Deloitte) & Professor Simon Rofe (Leeds Beckett University)

EVENING RECEPTION & DINNER | 20:00 - 22:30

Football's Global Responsibility

Keynote Addresses: Jason McAteer (Former Liverpool and Ireland Professional Football Player), Kaylyn Kyle (TV Host)

DAY 2 | 5 June 2026

PLENARY SESSION 4 | 10:00 - 11:20

Integration & Policy Challenges: A Holistic Approach to Sport, Diplomacy, Fan Engagement and AI

Case Study 1: Ethical & Sustainable Sport

Guido Battaglia, Head of Partnerships, CSHR

Case Study 2: Sport as Diplomatic Tool

Gavin Price, Director, UK / Europe Sports Diplomacy Alliance

Case Study 3: Sport as Development Tool

Arnaud Amouroux, Programme Officer, UN Cyprus

Case Study 4: Fan Engagement & Ethical Monetisation

PluggableAI (Nuno Azevedo e Cardoso & Bruno Fernandes)

Moderator: Joshua Newman, Associate Dean, Florida State University

Audience Reflections

CONSOLIDATING INSIGHTS | 11:20 - 12:00

- **Identify tensions: commercial vs social, innovation vs ethics**
- **Aligning sport, business, and policy priorities**
- **Led by legal and governance experts from Shoosmiths**
- **Preparing delegates for afternoon breakout workshops**

Lunch Break | 12:00 - 13:15

THEMATIC BREAKOUT WORKSHOPS | 13:15 - 15:45

Group 1: Sport Diplomacy & International Relations

Facilitator: Gavin Price, Director, UK / Europe Sports Diplomacy Alliance

Group 2: Legacy, Infrastructure & Community Development

Facilitators: Arnaud Amouroux (Programme Officer, UN Cyprus), Stephen Reynard (Global Head of Sport, UNHCR), Ludovic Dau (Sports and Programmes Director, Peace & Sport)

Group 3: Fan Engagement & Sustainable Monetisation

Facilitator: PluggableAI (Nuno Azevedo e Cardoso & Bruno Fernandes)

Group 4: AI, Data, Ethics & Performance

Facilitators: Brian Taylor & Greg Jordan (Hudl)

Coffee Break 14:30 - 15:00 | Part II continues 15:00 - 15:45

DAY 2 | 5 June 2026 (continued)

REPORT-BACK & DRAFT WHITE PAPER | 15:45 - 16:45

Each breakout group presents key findings
Live synthesis into the UNITAR Sport Diplomacy White Paper
Key commitments and actionable recommendations

CLOSING SESSION | 16:45 - 18:00

White Paper development timeline and next steps
Delegate working group assignments
Wrap-up remarks by UNITAR, VSI, and UREKA moderators
Call to action for ongoing collaboration

POST-SUMMIT OUTPUTS & COMMITMENTS

Sport Diplomacy White Paper endorsed by UNITAR
Thematic frameworks with actionable recommendations
Collective non-binding pledge for ongoing collaboration and sustainable development goals