Mr. President,

I am honoured and privileged to participate in today’s discussion on ‘Sport for peace and development: building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal’.

As I am speaking for the first time in the 64th session of the General Assembly, please allow me at the outset to add my voice to that of all the others in congratulating you on assuming the Presidency of the General Assembly.

Mr. President,
By its very nature, sport is about inclusion and participation. It brings individuals and communities together and bridges ethnic and cultural divides.

It transcends social-cultural barriers, geographical borders, and promotes peace and harmony.

It also provides for understanding the importance of discipline and leadership.

Mr. President,

Sport is an inalienable part of the educational process and an essential component of a child’s development.

It also fosters their physical and emotional health and building valuable social connections.

The fundamental elements of sports, including obvious benefits of physical and mental well being, make sports a most useful tool to support the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals.

Moreover, sporting activities have a unique convening power to spur social communication and advocacy.

They are most effective tools for social mobilisation supporting activities such as HIV/AIDS education and immunization campaigns.

In re-channelizing destructive impulses and harmful actions such as drug abuse and involvement in crime, the efficacy of sport cannot be overemphasized.

Mr. President,

A mastery over sports was considered as important as the knowledge of scriptures in ancient India.

The education system in modern India is trying to continue and build upon this heritage and respect for sports and physical education.

The effort of the Government of India has been for broad-basing sports and provision of modern sports infrastructure.

A National Sports Policy was adopted by India in 2001.
The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in the Government of India has the national level responsibility for sports with the Sports Authority of India being its principal arm for nurturing talent and for provision of infrastructure, equipment, coaching and other facilities.

And, here, if I may add a personal touch – I am, indeed, proud that India’s National Institute of Sports is located in my constituency, Patiala and my family has been and is intimately connected with the Olympic movement.

The Government has also encouraged the National Sports Federations to function more efficiently and is also encouraging the active involvement of business and industry in the promotion of sports.

Mr. President,

We are proud that New Delhi will be hosting the next Commonwealth Games from October 3-14, 2010.

These games are a unique, world class, multi-sport event held once every four years amongst the member countries and territories of the Commonwealth.

The three core values of the Commonwealth Games movement are humanity, equality and destiny, which were adopted by the games movement in 2001.

These values inspire and unite millions of people and symbolise the broad mandate for holding the games within the Commonwealth.

Last year, India organised Commonwealth Youth Games, a sub-event of the Commonwealth Games in Pune in October 2008.

Mr. President,

The founder of modern Olympic Games, Pierre de Coubertin, had said, “Sport must be the heritage of all men and of all social classes”.

India is steadfast in its commitment to the Olympic charter and, as in previous years, is cosponsoring in the General Assembly the resolution on ‘Sport for peace and development: building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal’.

We are also very pleased that the 2016 Olympics have been awarded to Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, a fellow developing country, and that the 2010 FIFA World Cup will be hosted by South Africa, a first for the African continent. We are also co-sponsoring the resolution on the ‘2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa’.
We also wish Canada all success in organizing the XXI Winter Olympic Games and X Para-Olympic Winter Games and commend Singapore’s initiative to organize the Youth Olympic Games.

We have no doubt that the hosting of major global sporting events in developing countries would contribute in an immense manner to the advancement of sports in developing countries and spur developmental activities.

Mr. President,

Sport is a reflection of the society. The degeneration of values in the society – violence, corruption, hooliganism, deception and drug abuse are also making inroads in sport.

Concerted vigil and resolute action are needed to prevent intrusion of these evils and to protect the noble ideals and spirit behind the Olympic Games and other sports.

It must be our endeavour to promote sports and a culture of sports in our countries. This can only contribute in promoting development, peace, friendship, cooperation and understanding among peoples.

I thank you.