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Game on for Community Relations through Sport

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Donegal Sports Partnership today launched the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) funded 'Community Relations through Sport' project at An Grianán Theatre in Letterkenny. The innovative project, which uses the medium of sport to promote peace and reconciliation, was officially launched by Mr. Winston Patterson, Board Member of the International Fund for Ireland.

The IFI, under its Community Based Economic & Social Regeneration Programme, awarded funding of EUR152,000 late last year towards this two-year programme, which will work within the border communities of Donegal, West Tyrone and Derry. The project will engage 150 young people between the ages of 14-18, from all religious backgrounds, in a programme of capacity- and confidence-building, and improvement of self esteem, with the aim of creating a more vibrant and inclusive community. Community Relations through Sport proposes to address social exclusion, racism and sectarianism through the medium of sport and physical activity.

Speaking at the launch, Mr. Winston Patterson, Board Member of the International Fund for Ireland, remarked, "The International Fund for Ireland is very pleased to support the Community Relations through Sport Project. Sport is a universal language and capable of reaching the communities with which the Fund wants to work, and there is no doubt that sport can play a key role in delivering the message of building peace and reconciliation in a very effective manner." Mr. Patterson also recorded the IFI's appreciation for the international donors to the IFI - the US, EU, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, who had made possible the Fund's support for the project.

The Community Relations through Sport project will include practical support from national governing bodies of both majority and minority sports, including the GAA, FAI, IRFU, Cricket Ireland, Athletics, Badminton Ireland and Cycling Ireland. This will be twinned with community relations and cultural diversity workshops which will allow young people to explore their own culture, beliefs and traditions and to challenge stereotypes in order to acknowledge and address difference.

Myles Sweeney, Donegal Sports Partnership Co-ordinator, welcomed the International Fund for Ireland's financial assistance for the project. He highlighted the important role that sport and physical activity can play in addressing issues relating to community relations, sectarianism, racism and social exclusion. The delivery of a sports and education programme under the Community Relations through Sport project will help challenge stereotypes associated with these issues.

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About the International Fund for Ireland

The International Fund for Ireland is an international organisation established by the Irish and British Governments in 1986. The Fund's main objectives are to promote economic and social advance and encourage contact, dialogue and reconciliation between unionists and nationalists throughout Ireland.

Contributors to the Fund are the United States of America, the European Union, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Since its inception, the Fund has committed more than EUR811m/STG648m to a wide variety of projects in Northern Ireland and the southern border counties. Developing and funding initiatives that tackle segregation and promote integration to build a lasting peace in Northern Ireland and the southern border counties is a key priority for the Fund.