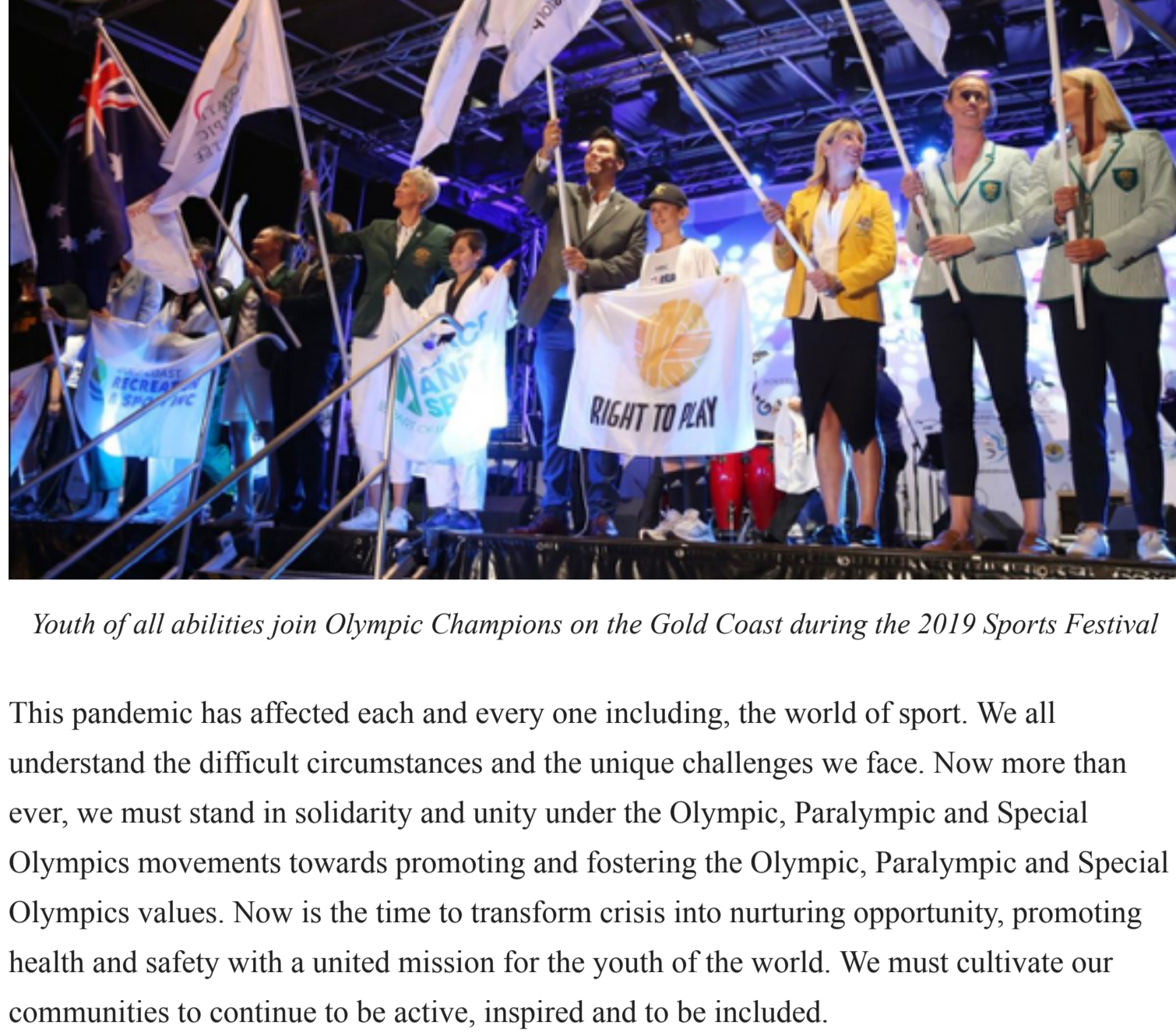




UNITED THROUGH SPORTS LAUNCHES THE INTERNATIONAL VIRTUAL YOUTH FESTIVAL

The COVID-19 pandemic has given life to the United Through Sports (UTS) Virtual Youth Festival 2020, that goes far beyond a temporary solution to the cancellation of sport events. It is a positive opportunity to move forward and bring us all back together. The unique Virtual Youth Festival will be held and broadcast online, bringing Olympic and non-Olympic sports together.

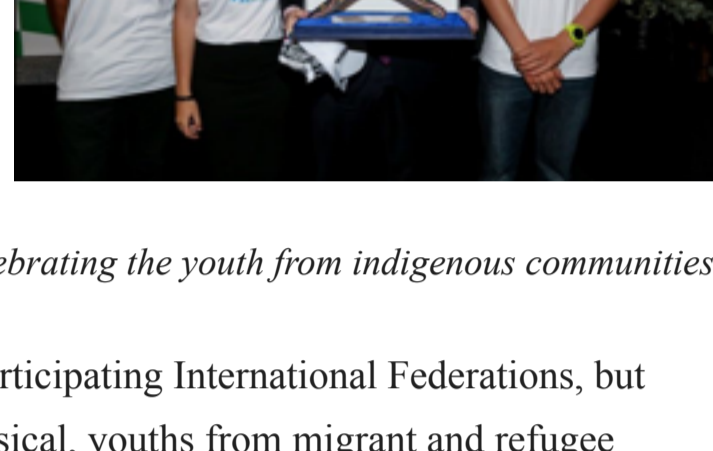
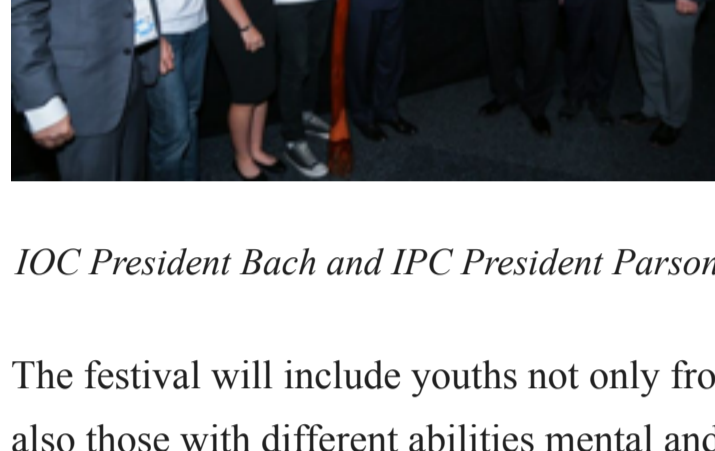


Youth of all abilities join Olympic Champions on the Gold Coast during the 2019 Sports Festival

This pandemic has affected each and every one including, the world of sport. We all understand the difficult circumstances and the unique challenges we face. Now more than ever, we must stand in solidarity and unity under the Olympic, Paralympic and Special Olympics movements towards promoting and fostering the Olympic, Paralympic and Special Olympics values. Now is the time to transform crisis into nurturing opportunity, promoting health and safety with a united mission for the youth of the world. We must cultivate our communities to continue to be active, inspired and to be included.

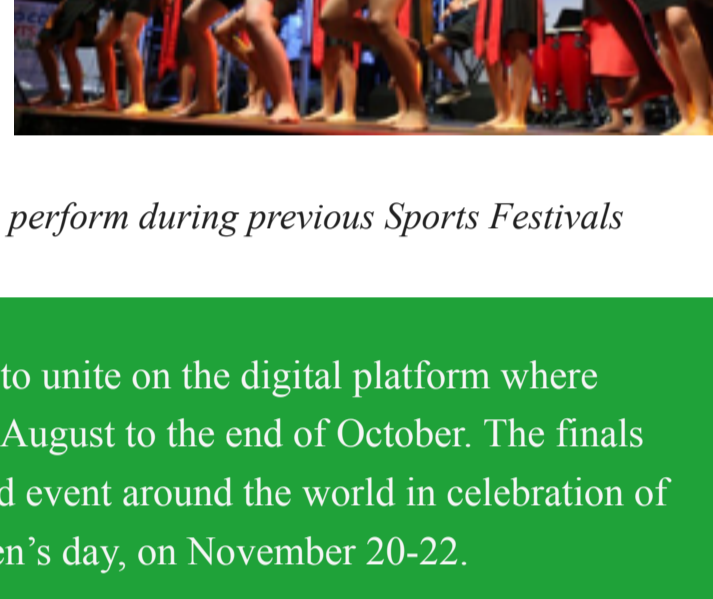
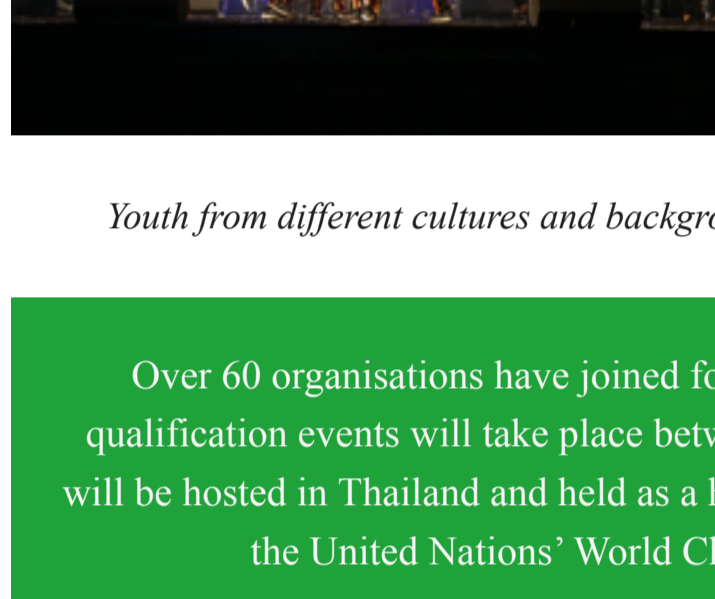
We have seen many inspiring initiatives as organisations pivot and adapt, navigating the current unpredictable landscape. In 2017 the United Through Sports initiative was born to create and contribute towards a better world, with and for our youth.

The festival is under the patronage of the International Olympic Committee, the International Paralympic Committee, Special Olympics, SportAccord and the Global Association of International Sports Federations. Many International Federations, global NGO's and sport affiliated entities are uniting to showcase, demonstrate and promote inclusion, equality, non-discrimination and peace-promotion. The UTS Virtual Youth Festival is a celebration of our youth who will carry the torch of life for the next generations, and on this platform everybody is equal.



IOC President Bach and IPC President Parsons celebrating the youth from indigenous communities

The festival will include youths not only from participating International Federations, but also those with different abilities mental and physical, youths from migrant and refugee backgrounds, youth from the indigenous community and those from vulnerable backgrounds who are often marginalised by society. United we shall create opportunity and give these youth autonomy and hope.



Youth from different cultures and backgrounds perform during previous Sports Festivals

Over 60 organisations have joined forces to unite on the digital platform where qualification events will take place between August to the end of October. The finals will be hosted in Thailand and held as a hybrid event around the world in celebration of the United Nations' World Children's Day, on November 20-22.

The festival will include virtual medal ceremonies, inspirational opening and closing ceremonies and will incorporate a vital platform of education by including: webinars, an opening conference, panel discussions and workshops. Topics of focus will include: Peace through sport, Inclusion and non-discrimination, Athletes' roles and responsibilities, Safeguarding and child protection among others. Over 100 youth ambassadors, together with the leaders of sport and all participating entities will make a unified call to action towards a better tomorrow.



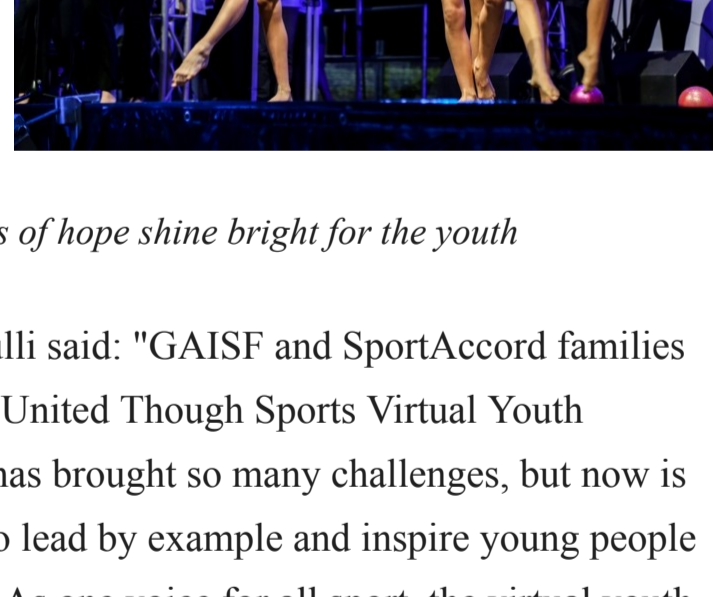
Leaders of sport come together for the sports festival to celebrate youth

IOC President Dr Thomas Bach said: "The current coronavirus crisis has proven that sport and an active lifestyle can save lives. With its own campaigns, the IOC has been working since the beginning of the crisis to make it even more evident how important sport is for physical and mental health, in particular in times of lockdown, social distancing and uncertainty. The IOC is excited that the UTS Virtual Youth Festival 2020 is inviting youth of all abilities and backgrounds from the international sports community. We have given patronage to the UTS Virtual Youth Festival 2020 and will also play an active part."

During a time when the postponed Olympic and Paralympic Games should have taken place IPC President, Andrew Parsons stated: "Never has sport and the need to remain active being as important as it is now during the global COVID-19 pandemic due to the physical and mental health benefits it brings. The IPC through its patronage fully supports this innovative festival that will engage youngsters of all abilities around the world and keep them active during this difficult time."

Mary Davis, CEO of Special Olympics stated: "On behalf of our over six million Special Olympics athletes, we are delighted to grant patronage and applaud the effort of UTS to demonstrate the power of inclusive sport for all. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Special Olympics halted all training and competitions for 2020, however are excited and we fully support the United Through Sports Virtual Youth Festival 2020 as being especially important for our athletes, to remain active, connected and certainly included. May this Festival be the first of many more inclusive events to come."

With the finals being held on United Nations' World Children's Day, the former 8th UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon said: "We all face challenges amidst the pandemic global shift. Now is the time we must think forward and we must take action towards empowering our youth towards the future. This UTS Virtual Youth Festival is a unique opportunity for youth of all abilities to unite through the digital ecosystem in friendship, sports, health and education. United, we must stand for youth rights ensuring equality and the inclusion of all youth. This Festival will open many new doors of opportunity for us to reach youth all over the world. Let us reach them together."



From generation to generation, candles of hope shine bright for the youth

GAISF and SportAccord President Raffaele Chiulli said: "GAISF and SportAccord families are proud to play an active role in the innovative United Through Sports Virtual Youth Festival 2020. The global COVID-19 pandemic has brought so many challenges, but now is the time for the international sports community to lead by example and inspire young people and their families around the world to get active. As one voice for all sport, the virtual youth festival will be a fantastic opportunity to showcase and celebrate the fundamental values of equality, diversity and inclusion."

"During such unprecedented and challenging times, we must continue to create opportunities, putting the youth of the world at centre stage," stated UTS President Stephan Fox. "We must also understand that for many vulnerable youth, once the pandemic ends, they will continue to live in lock down and in challenging environments. We want to create an event that is active and educational for all our youth and regardless to who is up on the podium, the closing ceremony will see the youth of the world come together for one global celebration."

With the finals to be hosted in Bangkok, the President of the National Olympic Committee of Thailand General Prawit Wongsuwan said: "The Corona Virus Pandemic requires our solidarity, determination, compassion and compromise. The Kingdom of Thailand is proud to host the finals of the UTS Virtual Youth Festival 2020 under patronage of the IOC, IPC and SOI in celebration of World Children's Day. Let us be united by the Olympic, Paralympic and Special Olympics values in all our diversity towards a better tomorrow."



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