

# More active people for a healthier world

## 9<sup>th</sup> WHO Dialogue with Sports-related Industries on the Implementation of the Global Action Plan on Physical Activity (GAPPA) 2018-2030

WHO Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland  
Thursday 12 December 2024, Hybrid

# Meeting Report

### Welcome

Dr Ruediger Krech thanked participants for attendance, their continued interest in the global agenda on physical activity and recognized the importance of these WHO dialogues. A review of past dialogues highlighted 1) the need for a clear voice from the industry in global forums; 2) collective interest amongst the sport and physical activity industry to increase levels of physical activity; 3) a recognition of data gaps and the challenge created for advocacy and policy development; and 4) the opportunity for the sporting goods industries to contribute to societal well-being.

### Introductions

Dr Fiona Bull led a tour de table of introductions.

### Session—Industry updates

#### World Federation of Sporting Goods Industry (WFSGI)

Highlights of 2024 included: 1) a joint industry statement<sup>1</sup> signed by 48 members of federations, including 25 CEOs, launched in June 2024 aligned with the release of the new WHO data on levels of physical inactivity in adult populations; the report had strong engagement and content reached about 15.5 million on social media; 2) strengthening partnerships including with the World Economic Forum (WEF), UNESCO, and the McKinsey Health Institute, as well as with OECD Business for Health, and work on a forthcoming OECD position statement to align physical activity health, sport for nature and the climate change agenda; and 3) the increased membership to 25 of the WFSGI Physical Activity Committee (PAC) and across the membership increasing engagement in the physical activity agenda and work.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://wfsgi.org/2024/06/adult-physical-inactivity-levels/>

Plans for 2025 include optimizing opportunities and events to promote physical activity and make the link between physical activity and climate issues; a panel session at WEF in Davos; a side-event meeting during the week of the World Health Assembly in Geneva in May 2025; a presence at COP30; and continued work activities with WHO under the MOU.

#### Europe Active (EA)

Updated on recent leadership changes and review of current work including focus on a new framework for EA work structured around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and on why it's important to get more people active. The priorities identified include: 1) developing more capacity-building and training programs for the support of the national organizations; 2) diversifying membership; 3) continued contribution to the European Week of Sports and the Be Active campaign; and 4) implementing promotional activities at trade events such as the annual European Health and Fitness Forum. EA has a diverse membership with corporates, technology companies, suppliers, operators, and national associations. It was noted that national associations become more important as they are quite developed and advanced. EA will continue its key role in building capacity, providing training, and driving the European Union (EU) agenda. For 2025, work plans include events to drive the agenda and bring the entire ecosystem together on the EU and political level, helping to shape policy.

#### World Active (WA)

World Active is a collective of 52 associations internationally with the core focus being “more people, more active, more often.” The WA vision is to serve as the global representative voice for the fitness and physical activity sector and advocate for an active and healthier world. This will be done collaboratively by connecting leaders, organizations, and advocates to elevate standards, for coaches, for facilities, for communications through membership association to elevate quality, and build assurance in systems and professional trust. World Active will also work to ensure equitable access to fitness and physical activity opportunities, well beyond brick and mortar, including in parks, in workplace, and in people's homes.

During 2025, the primary goal is to complete the formalization of a World Active headquarters, including business IP, revised website, marketing plan, membership structure and fee schedule; finalize regional representatives and other stakeholders; identify association funding; and plan for a third summit in 2025.

#### Health and Fitness Association (HFA)

Health and Fitness reported tremendous growth as an industry and as an organization is focused on three priorities: advocacy, research, and education. The planned priorities include: 1) advocacy activities such as the annual summit; 2) monitoring and advocating for specific legislation (Fit Act in USA); 3) continuing to conduct research and publish industry reports; 4); professional education to members; and 4) a strategic approach to partnerships. In the USA the next decade is seen as the “Mega Decade of Sport” given the number of international sports events to be hosted in the region. The Association's effort is to assist in the global inactivity challenge and position the industry to drive increased participation worldwide. The Global Advocacy Summit, to be held at HFA show in March 2025 in Las Vegas will have focus on collective action to get more people moving. There are five other summits in 2025--the Latin America summit and forum, a Japanese forum, European, Oceania, Canada, and China.

### Session discussion - Summary highlights

- Evidence of clear focus by all on partnering and collaboration; expanding the ecosystem for more reach and impact; and shared values and aims include more people, more active, more often; and to get the least active starting and the underactive moving more.
- Noted that partnering can be chaotic if not focused and can delay the industry reaching and engaging in higher-level policy and practice related conversations.
- Discussion of coordination across the industry associations on 2-3 specific items for joint actions to build more visibility and coherence of messages to key audiences.
- Common areas of interest were apparent, including advocacy, leveraging digital technology, diversity, and strengthening the industry's contribution to health.
- Value of partnership is that each organization has a different reach and membership from gyms to equipment to outdoors—together this makes a great solution provider.
- Noted that it was time to be bold and ambitious and not to underestimate the value of speaking out as an aligned industry. It's not just Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Its business.

### Session --WHO updates on global work on physical activity

Head of unit Dr Fiona Bull provided a summary of highlights of WHO work on physical activity and achievements over 2004. These included:

- Publication of updated global comparable prevalence estimates of levels of physical inactivity in adults.<sup>2</sup>
- Convening of two expert meetings to progress work on developing global guidance on the measurement methods for assessing physical activity, including the use of digital wearable technologies; meeting reports available online.<sup>34</sup>
- Successful sponsorship of the 10<sup>th</sup> International Society of Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) Congress, Paris, October 2024<sup>5</sup> supporting global knowledge-sharing.
- Completion of the WHA Resolution *Strengthening health and well-being through sport* at the World Health Assembly in May 2024, supported by over 40 countries.
- Publication of a number of reports and scientific papers on the role of sport events and the promotion of physical activity through for example legacy initiatives.

WHO outlined plans and priorities for 2025 which include:

- Continuing technical work on updating the global estimates on levels of physical inactivity with a focus on adolescent populations, forecasted to be completed by late 2025/early 2026.
- Launch of a new WHO ACTIVE toolkit on *Walking and Cycling: Policy Options* (estimated launch May 2025) which will provide guidance linked to specifically GAPPA strategic area 2 – Creating healthy

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240096905>

<sup>3</sup> <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/379652/9789240102545-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

<sup>4</sup> <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/378157/9789240095557-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

<sup>5</sup> <https://congress2024.ispah.org/>

spaces and places. Noted the intent for year 2025 to have as strong focus on the walking and cycling agenda and dissemination of the key recommendations on: legislation, regulation, street design and public open spaces. Invited all association to support this agenda with aligned messages about how to promote, enable and protect more safe walking and cycling, which includes, through safer roads, good design, promotion campaigns and initiatives to help more people to walk, cycle and be active.

- Commencing work to develop a Second *Global Status Report* for launch in 2026 aligned with the reporting to the World Health Assembly in May 2026 on the global progress of country implementation of the Global Action Plan on Physical Activity.
- Development of policy implementation resources<sup>6</sup> to support building capacity in sport, health, and non-health sectors for the implementation of the *Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018-2030*.
- Partnering to conduct and update the analysis<sup>7</sup> on the economics of physical inactivity and make develop the investment case for physical activity. This work includes ongoing interest in the methods used for Social Return on Investment (SROI).
- Advance and completed global guidance on the measurement of physical activity using digital wearable technology, as well further work on the use in promoting behaviour change as noted in GAPP Policy action 4.2.
- New emerging work due to Member State interest is in the area of global guidance on measuring fitness (including cardiorespiratory fitness, muscle strength fitness, balance, and other components) in youth, adults and older adults. Currently WHO has no guidelines, no standards, no measurement recommendations, and yet recently this is asked for more often.
- Continue strengthening partnerships including taking on the role of Co-chair of the UN Interagency working group on Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). The aims of the working group are to coordinate and strengthen the work across the UN systems on SDP and support UNDESA.

#### Final open discussion - Summary highlights

1. Discussion noted the importance of industry standards and their role in professionalizing the industry and as part of the evolution of the industry from “fitness” to “physical activity practitioners” - trusted by health. Offering industry standards to professionals who want to improve their skill and setting the right standards can contribute to recognition. Although this has been discussed for many years it seems there has still be slow progress. There is a need to understand and address the barriers.
2. The intersect between industry and the health system and health care professionals was noted and seen as important to strengthen. In particular so that counselling and recommendations on physical activity (PA) in a consultation with a healthcare provider (including physios, pharmacists, and others) can be supported. Question raised asked where the industry fits in to support healthcare advising and

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.who.int/initiatives/gappa/resources>

<sup>7</sup> [The cost of inaction on physical inactivity to public health-care systems: a population-attributable fraction analysis - The Lancet Global Health](#)

signposting and whether this could include industry becoming a service delivery provider - trusted, available, accessible, affordable.

3. Regarding global advocacy, industry noted the need to drive collective action and impact on physical activity and also asked what other partners were needed as there were still siloes to break down. The need for, and opportunities to strengthen, alignment of industry activities was discussed, and ideas included conducting joint promotion and awareness days and campaigns.
4. It was generally agreed there is a need for common standards for methods of fitness assessment and that this could be an area of alignment between the industry and health. The potential interest of the health insurance sector was noted. The American College Sports of Medicine (ACSM) standardization of fitness testing was noted and recommended as a starting point for WHO work on guidance on measuring fitness. Industry noted good connection with the sports medicine sector and could support development of measurement standards which could be an area of alignment across the associations.
5. The discussion on wearables noted the need for standards for measurement - and the variation in the quality of algorithms, sensors, metrics, data processing and validation. Interest across the industry was noted in this area.

#### Actions

1. Industry representatives will communicate and consider topics for the next dialogue in Q1 of 2025.
2. WHO will convene the 10<sup>th</sup> Dialogue in Q2 of 2025.

## Annex 1 -Programme



### MORE ACTIVE PEOPLE FOR A HEALTHIER WORLD

9th WHO Dialogue with sports-related industries on the implementation of the Global Action Plan on Physical Activity (GAPPA) 2018-2030

**WHO Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland**

Thursday 12 December 2024, Hybrid/virtual

### Objectives of the Meeting

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1. Provide briefing to industry on WHO's global strategy and progress on physical activity
2. Share information from industry on activities and achievements aligned to the promotion of physical activity
3. Provide insights on global levels of physical activity and discuss implications for sport industry
4. Commence planning of the 10<sup>th</sup> dialogue

### Programme

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**15:00 Open meeting and welcome (15 minutes)**

- Introductions - tour de table

**15:15 Session two (60 minutes)—Change of order**

**Industry updates** – Presentations of key work, challenges, and priorities (10 minutes each and Q&A)

- WFSGI
- Health and Fitness
- Europe Active
- World Active

**16:15 Short stretch break**

**16:30 Session one (45 minutes)—Change of order**

**WHO physical activity progress and future priorities**

- Fiona Bull, Unit Head Physical Activity Unit, WHO
- Q&A

**17:15 Short stretch break**

**17:30 Session three** (30 minutes)

**Data - What we have and what we need**

- Fiona Bull, Unit Head Physical Activity Unit, WHO
- Review of current data on levels of participation and introduction to current and future work to strengthen data driven policy and programs – including leveraging digital / wearable technology.
- Discussion

**18:00 Planning forward** – Proposal for 10<sup>th</sup> WHO Dialogue as in-person in Q1 2025 (25 minutes)

- General discussion on meeting focus and purpose to ensure maximum value to all stakeholders, attendance, and potential dates

**18:25 Summary and close day** (5 minutes)

## Annex 2 -List of participants

### Industry Associations

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#### World Federation of the Sporting Goods Industry (WFSGI)

Emma Zwiebler, Virtual  
CEO, WFSGI  
Switzerland

Caroline Brooks, Virtual  
Head of Physical Activity  
UK

#### Health and Fitness

Liz Clark, Virtual  
President and CEO, Health and Fitness  
USA

#### Europe Active

Kai Troll, In person  
Executive Director, Europe Active  
Denmark

David Stalker, In-person  
President, Europe Active  
U.K.

#### World Active

Amy Boone Thompson, Virtual  
Chair, World Active  
US

### World Health Organization

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Fiona Bull, In person  
Unit Head, Physical Activity  
Department of Health Promotion  
Universal Health Coverage/  
Healthier Populations Division

Ruediger Krech, Virtual  
Director of Health Promotion  
Universal Health Coverage/  
Healthier Populations Division

Shelley Wallace, In person  
Technical Officer, Physical Activity Unit  
Department of Health Promotion  
Universal Health Coverage/Healthier  
Populations Division