

UNOCA encourages teams to respect fair-play and keep up the spirit of brotherhood during the “CAN 2015”

Libreville (Gabon), 15 January 2015 – The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), Mr. Abdoulaye Bathily, encourages the teams to observe fair-play and to keep up the spirit of brotherhood in the run of 30th Edition of the African Cup of Nations, from 17 January to 8 February 2015, in Equatorial Guinea. He also calls on supporters and soccer fans to show discipline; spare any acts of violence or thrilling that could compromise the good running of the competition.

“Football is not only a game or an entertainment, it is also a way to promote and spread values such as stamina, diversity, solidarity and team spirit as well as the acceptance of rules established”, explains Mr. Bathily. “This popular sport allows developing a culture of tolerance and mutual respect between actors from different backgrounds”, he adds.

“Soccer is also a factor of unity at the service of peace and development”, says the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Central Africa, hailing the contribution of the sport federations and that of the Confederation of African Football (CAF) in the fight against inequalities and in the promotion of a positive and dynamic Africa.

Mr. Bathily congratulates football players for their significant participation in those citizen actions, which are consistent with values that the United Nations defend even with the Resolution 66/5 of the 17 October 2011 of the General Assembly relating to the “Building of a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal.” It is the same with that of 18 October 2010 (65/4) entitled “Sport as means to promote education, health, development and peace”. Moreover, the Resolution 13/27 of 26 March 2010 (Human Rights Council) encourages “a world of sports free from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance”.

It is in this context that the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the Confederation of African Football (CAF) have signed a framework of partnership on 10 November 2012, in the margin of the 8th edition of the feminine CAN that took place in Malabo. In this regard, CAF supported the launching of the ‘The Tournament of Peace’ initiated by UNOCA in September 2013. In addition, the two institutions have co-organized a friendly international football match “for peace and security in Central Africa” on 7 December 2012 in Brazzaville between *Diablos Noirs* of Congo and *Tout puissant Mazembé* of the Republic Democratic of Congo (0-2)

“We should continue to work together to ensure that sport in general, and football in particular, stays a powerful vector of communion, social cohesion, pacific coexistence and development as well as a precious tool of preventive diplomacy”, states Mr. Bathily, wishing that during the CAN 2015, calm and peace reign in all the countries to allow the populations to enjoy moments of happiness that offer this great continental football festival.

Among the sixteen teams that will participate in the competition, five belong to the Central Africa sub-region covered by UNOCA: Cameroun, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Republic Democratic of Congo. The other countries include Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cap Verde, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Senegal, South Africa, Tunisia and Zambia.