



Soccer stars Luis Figo and Francesco Toldo were at the United Nations today for the launch of a new partnership between the world body and the charitable organization Inter Campus, which the Italian soccer team Internazionale Milano (Inter Milan) runs to help disadvantaged youth.

The retired players spoke of their involvement in the charity, which is currently helping 10,000 children in need in 25 countries worldwide with its soccer-based social and cooperation programmes – and will open a campus in Tunisia with the UN Office on Sport for Development and Peace ([UNOSDP](#)).

“It is a fantastic partnership for us (that) will give us great credibility in the work we are doing,” Mr. Figo, a midfielder who played for Inter Milan, among other teams, and was chosen to play for his native Portugal more than any other player in history, said in an interview with the UN News Centre.

He spoke of the partnership being “for life,” adding that the UN could give Inter Campus the “right support and the right partners to continue to develop.”

Mr. Toldo spoke of how Inter Campus works in many of the same areas of the world where the UN is equally deeply committed to advancing peace, security and development agendas – not least in the Middle East, where he said the charity had used soccer to bring together 100 Israeli and 100 Palestinian children.

“Initially, when these children entered the football pitch, the Israelis and Palestinians occupied opposite sides,” Mr. Toldo, a retired goalkeeper from Italy, whose 20-year career included nine seasons with Inter Milan, said in a separate interview.

“But when we gave them footballs and Inter shirts, they immediately mixed and played together.”

The Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, Wilfried Lemke, said that Inter Milan had become a “role model” for other soccer clubs that were now beginning to do more in the field of “social responsibility.”

“We are focusing on how we can use sport as a tool for development and peace,” he said of the UN’s efforts in this area, as he briefed reporters at UN Headquarters. “And there, we need role models.”

Italy’s Ambassador to the UN, Cesare Maria Ragaglini, said the Inter Campus initiative had given children in some of the world’s most disadvantaged countries, including many torn apart by war, the “right to play and the right to smile.” Throughout the day, the players highlighted programmes in such countries as Angola, Venezuela and Brazil.

Inter Milan president Massimo Moratti founded Inter Campus in 1996, and operations began a year later. Run today by Mr. Moratti’s daughter, Carlotta Moratti, the charity partners not only with local non-governmental agencies, but also private sector businesses, which cover programme costs.

Mr. Figo said that he got involved in Inter Campus not only because he thought it a worthy cause, but because he too felt good when he saw the results.

“I know we cannot change the world, but if we can change the life – in this case of thousands of kids – the satisfaction is huge,” he said.

“I think that the community of football has a responsibility in terms of social integration,” he added.

Soccer stars help launch partnership between UN and Inter Milan to help young people

Thursday, 29 November 2012 12:49

Mr. Toldo said he liked the idea of “giving back” to youth who did not have hope.

Source: [UN News Centre](#)