



COMMUN IX
INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT (ICAS)

Background Guide

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

We are so glad you are participating in the General Assembly for the International Council of Arbitration for Sport for COMMUN IX. The International Council of Arbitration for Sport (ICAS) is a body made to deal with disputes in both international sports competitions and domestic leagues. The body was originally conceived of in 1984 by the president of the International Olympic Committee to deal with political disputes arising during the Olympics. Today, it plays a pivotal role in upholding the principles of justice in the wider world of sports.

This committee, run by two co-chairs, will oversee two topics in the world of sports:

1. **Gender equality**
2. **Sportswashing**

Both are relevant topics in the world of sports and, depending on impending sanctions and laws, could have major implications on how politics can change sports and vice versa. There have been many cases where both issues above have transcended the world of sports and had an impact on global-scale politics.

One major topic in gender equality in sports for many decades has been the U.S. women's national soccer team's fight for equal pay, which has highlighted salary disparities between male and female athletes despite their relative success and achievements. This issue, of course, extends beyond sports, reflecting broader conversations about gender equity in various industries.

Sportswashing, the other topic you'll be focusing on, is the practice of nations, individuals, groups, corporations, or governments using sports to improve reputations tarnished by wrongdoing. An example of sportswashing that sparked international debate was Qatar's recent hosting of the FIFA World Cup. Qatar faced scrutiny due to allegations of human rights abuses and poor working conditions for migrant workers involved in the event's infrastructure development. The controversy surrounding the World Cup served as a distinct example of how sportswashing practices can draw attention to larger geopolitical issues, forcing the international community to grapple with the ethical implications of awarding major sports events to certain nations.

To encourage a thoughtful and engaging discussion on these topics, **position papers will be required for this committee** in order to be eligible for awards.

Sincerely,

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PROBLEM STATEMENTS

Sportswashing:

In recent years, there has been growing concern about the manipulation of sporting events and the use of sports as a means to divert attention from domestic and international issues. A common example of sportswashing is when a country under scrutiny hosts a major sporting tournament (Qatar World Cup 2022 and China 2008 Olympics, for example) to improve their image. Historically, these countries have also manipulated these competitions through match-fixing and doping. To uphold the integrity of sports and ensure fair competition, it is essential to develop effective strategies that can identify and combat these issues. Such goals may include increasing transparency, enforcing stricter regulations, and fostering cooperation between international sports organizations, governments, and the private sector. Addressing these challenges is not only crucial to the credibility of sports but also to maintaining the ethical principles that sports should represent on the global stage. Sportswashing in the realm of international sports presents a critical challenge that requires immediate attention. It is the goal of this committee to come to legally binding resolutions that will prevent sportswashing in the future.

Gender Equality:

Despite significant progress made in recent years, discrepancies in opportunities and compensation for male and female athletes continue to persist. There are ongoing debates on how to implement policies that address these disparities and challenge stereotypes. These discussions aim to explore various approaches to create a more equitable sports environment.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Adapting to changing geopolitical landscapes, nations have leveraged sports events to shape narratives and mitigate negative perceptions on the global stage for the past hundred years, and continue to do so. This practice continues to raise ethical questions about the intersection of sports, politics, and human rights in the modern era.

A Brief Timeline of Sportswashing and Corruption:

Sportswashing has roots dating back to the 1936 Olympic Games held in Berlin, Germany. The Nazi party, under Adolf Hitler, sought to exploit the event for propaganda purposes. Despite protests from other world powers about Nazi Germany's discriminatory policies, the Games proceeded, marking an early example of sportswashing.¹

Later, the 1980 Moscow Olympics became a platform for the Soviet Union to assert its global influence through advertising and distributing propaganda. However, the event was marred by a boycott

¹ Source: [Extra History](#) (Great source for the entire timeline for when you're researching)

led by Western countries in protest of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, exemplifying the geopolitical complexities common in international sports competitions.²

In the 21st century, Russia also faced scrutiny for sportswashing during the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. The event aimed to project an image of a modern, powerful Russia but was tarnished by allegations of state-sponsored doping, as well as their views on environmental issues, their anti-LGBTQ+ stance, and their human rights violations.³

China hosted the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, presenting an opportunity for the Chinese government to showcase its economic development and achievements. However, their bid to host the games was met with criticism in regards to China's human rights record, particularly its treatment of Tibetans and political dissidents.⁴

More recently, the selection of Qatar as the host for the 2022 FIFA World Cup brought sportswashing back into public discussion. Qatar faced allegations of labor rights abuses and poor working conditions during the construction of World Cup infrastructure, prompting scrutiny of the event's ethical implications. They were also accused of lying about the death count and using sporting events to overshadow human rights issues like this.⁵

Additionally, Saudi Arabia has embraced sportswashing as part of its Vision 2030 initiative—investing significantly in sporting events like the Dakar Rally and hosting high-profile boxing matches. These endeavors are viewed as attempts to improve the Kingdom's international image while deflecting attention from human rights concerns and geopolitical controversies.⁶

Gender Equality:

The pursuit of gender equality in sports has evolved significantly, particularly as women's sports continue to gain mainstream recognition. The passage of Title IX in the United States in 1972 was a pivotal moment, prohibiting sex-based discrimination in educational programs, including sports. This legislation played a crucial role in fostering the growth of women's athletic programs in schools and colleges, laying the foundation for increased participation and visibility of women in sports.⁷

The conversation about equal pay in sports gained prominence in the late 20th century and intensified in the 21st century. In 1999, the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team (USWNT) filed a landmark gender discrimination lawsuit against the U.S. Soccer Federation, highlighting disparities in pay, working conditions, and promotional support compared to the men's team. Over the years, the USWNT continued to be at the forefront of discussions about equal pay, particularly following their victory in the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup. This success brought attention to the team's achievements and fueled conversations about the need for equitable compensation.⁸

Beyond soccer, tennis also played a role in advancing the dialogue on equal pay. Wimbledon, in 2007, became one of the first Grand Slam tournaments to offer equal prize money to male and female players.⁹ The WNBA, in 2021, negotiated a new collective bargaining agreement that included significant

² Source: [US Department of State](#)

³ Source: [The Guardian](#)

⁴ Source: [Human Rights Watch](#) (Also a great resource)

⁵ Source: [Journal Of Democracy](#)

⁶ Source: [The Guardian](#)

⁷ Source: [US Department of Education](#)

⁸ Source: [New York Times](#)

⁹ Source: [Reuters](#)

increases in player salaries and improved working conditions, representing a milestone in addressing gender disparities in professional basketball.¹⁰

However, challenges are still prevalent, as evidenced by ongoing lawsuits and discussions surrounding gender discrimination and pay gaps. The conversation about gender equality in sports continues to evolve, with athletes, advocates, and organizations working towards systemic changes to ensure equitable opportunities and compensation for female athletes across various sports. These efforts highlight the ongoing commitment to fostering a more inclusive and fair landscape for women in the realm of sports.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

While reading the country positions below, performing your own research, and writing your position paper, consider the following questions as tools to understand your country's stances and where you'll find common ground with other delegates.

- Has your country been accused of sportswashing? How did they respond?
- Has your country formally addressed sportswashing? Are they doing anything to prevent it occurring in the future?
- How do you suppose the UN might go about convincing countries that hosting tournaments isn't meant to take the spotlight away from other issues in your country?
- What is your country's stance on gender equality? How committed are they to the cause?
- Does your country base pay on how much teams make (through TV rights, ticket sales, tournament prize pool, etc.) or do they prioritize equal pay?
- What are some ways to improve the accessibility of sports across the globe?
- Does your country need more resources to finance athletic teams and facilities?
- How should locations for international tournaments be determined?
- How can countries encourage equal gender participation in sports?
- How do issues of gender equality and sportswashing in sports affect the world outside of athletics?

COUNTRY POSITIONS

These descriptions will form the foundation of your research by giving you a basic understanding of your country's point of view. Delegates are expected to supplement these brief introductions with their own research. Good luck, and let us know if you have any questions or concerns!

QATAR

Sportswashing: Qatar's bid to host the FIFA World Cup sparked debates and criticism regarding various issues, including allegations of labor rights abuses, poor working conditions for migrant workers

¹⁰ Source: [Deseret News](#)

involved in construction projects, concerns about worker deaths, restrictions on freedom of speech, and human rights¹¹ violations. The nation maintains that the significant investment in the event was a genuine effort to contribute to global sports and foster international goodwill, asserting that they are committed to addressing any shortcomings and using the platform to showcase positive aspects of their country.

Gender Equality: Qatar has faced scrutiny for its perceived challenges in promoting gender equality and equal pay in sports. The nation's stance on these issues has been a subject of debate. Critics point to disparities in pay and limited opportunities for female athletes. The country has had a severe lack of female competition in games they've heavily invested in on both the youth and professional level. Qatar acknowledges the challenges but asserts its commitment to progress, using these events as a platform to showcase advancements in promoting gender equality.

SAUDI ARABIA

Sportswashing: Saudi Arabia has utilized sporting events and leagues in numerous ways in order to rebrand the Kingdom, shifting global perceptions, and presenting a more progressive and open image to the world. The government claims they are hosting these events to attract global attention and showcase its capabilities in organizing large-scale events. Moreover, the government has used sports to align its efforts to diversify its economy and image from oil dependence.¹² Critics say the Kingdom is simply using an abundance of their “dirty money” to buy themselves a ticket into many sports and is intended to distract the world from their human rights abuses.¹³

Gender Equality: Critics also claim the KSA's emphasis on global-scale competitions has diverted attention away from the lack of opportunities for sportswomen in the country. As recently as 2018, women and girls have been prevented from participating in school sports or even entering stadiums.¹⁴ This is paired with the numerous other bans women faced and fought against over the past decade (ability to drive, travel abroad, etc.). The Kingdom says that promoting sport on an international level and bringing more sport to Saudi Arabia is already allowing more women to go professional. Their recent “Media Oasis” event aimed to show the diversification in sport that has already taken place and their plans to increase it in the future.¹⁵

BAHRAIN

Sportswashing: Bahrain, as a nation, hasn't been extensively associated with sportswashing. However, the country has been vocal in its support of other middle eastern countries similar to itself hosting major sporting events. Bahrain has utilized sports events, particularly hosting international competitions like the Bahrain Grand Prix in Formula One, as opportunities to showcase its cultural strengths. The government has used such events to demonstrate its capabilities as a country and to attract global attention to Bahrain. Criticisms or accusations of sportswashing have not been as prevalent in

¹¹ Source: [US Department of State](#)

¹² Source: [The Guardian](#)

¹³ Source: [The Guardian](#)

¹⁴ Source: [Human Rights Watch](#)

¹⁵ Source: [Times Of India](#)

Bahrain compared to some other nations, as the focus has primarily been on utilizing sports for economic and tourism-related purposes rather than deflecting attention from contentious issues. Overall, Bahrain's emphasis on hosting sporting events seems more aligned with showcasing its capabilities and attracting investments rather than deliberate sportswashing strategies.

Gender Equality: Bahrain, like many countries, faces challenges in achieving full gender equality in sports. Despite efforts to promote female participation, cultural barriers and societal expectations still hinder progress. Women may encounter obstacles in accessing resources, training facilities, and coaching opportunities compared to their male counterparts. Additionally, gender stereotypes and traditional roles may discourage girls and women from pursuing sports careers or participating in certain disciplines. Addressing these setbacks requires ongoing commitment to challenging norms, providing equal opportunities, and fostering a supportive environment for female athletes to thrive.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Sportswashing: The United States has been vocal about its concern over countries using sports events and investments to mask controversial issues. Emphasizing accountability and transparency, the U.S. stresses the importance of upholding human rights standards regardless of engagement in sports-related activities. It advocates for scrutiny to prevent sports from being used as a shield to evade accountability for serious concerns. Although the U.S. has used sports as a method to display certain values to the international community, the term "sportswashing" is more commonly associated with the use of sports to deflect attention from severe human rights violations or controversial policies,

Gender Equality: The U.S. has made significant strides in promoting gender equality in sports, with initiatives focused on ensuring equal opportunities for female athletes. Title IX, enacted in 1972, has played a crucial role in prohibiting sex-based discrimination in federally funded education programs, including athletics.¹⁶ The country has witnessed the rise of prominent female athletes across various sports, including Serena Williams in tennis, Megan Rapinoe in soccer, and Simone Biles in gymnastics. However, challenges persist, with issues like pay disparities and gender bias surfacing in discussions. The U.S. contends that ongoing efforts and initiatives, such as increased media coverage and corporate partnerships, are aimed at furthering gender equality in sports, reinforcing a commitment to inclusivity and progress.

UNITED KINGDOM

Sportswashing: While there have been instances raising ethical questions about certain sporting affiliations or events involving the UK, accusations of deliberate sportswashing by the UK government or authorities have not been as prevalent compared to some other nations. While there is a recognition that some countries utilize major sporting events or investments in sports as a way to improve their global image or divert attention from critical issues. The UK emphasizes the importance of upholding ethical standards in sports and remains vigilant against attempts to whitewash problematic behaviors through sports affiliations.

¹⁶ Source: [Women's Sports Foundation](#)

Gender Equality: The United Kingdom is actively committed to advancing gender equality in sports, striving to eliminate historical barriers that have limited women's participation. The country emphasizes equal opportunities for male and female athletes, with a particular focus on narrowing gender pay gaps within sports organizations. The UK champions initiatives supporting women's sports leagues, recognizing their crucial role in fostering talent development and providing platforms for female athletes to thrive. Despite ongoing challenges, the UK remains dedicated to creating an inclusive sporting environment where gender equality is a fundamental principle.

RUSSIA

Sportswashing: From Russia's viewpoint, hosting these events demonstrates the country's ability to deliver world-class tournaments and fosters a positive international image. However, critics argue that these events were used to deflect attention from controversies like doping scandals and geopolitical tensions. Despite facing allegations of sportswashing, Russia maintains that its involvement in sports is a legitimate avenue to promote national pride and attract tourism and investment to the country.

Gender Equality: Russia's perspective on gender equality in sports acknowledges the importance of providing equal opportunities for both men and women in sports participation. Russian female athletes, particularly in sports like gymnastics, tennis, and figure skating, have achieved international acclaim, contributing to the nation's sporting prowess. However, like many other nations, Russia also faces challenges related to gender inequality in sports, including disparities in funding, resources, media coverage, and sponsorship between male and female athletes. Efforts have been made to address these discrepancies, with initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality in sports governance, training programs, and encouraging participation at all levels. Despite progress, there remain ongoing discussions and efforts to further enhance gender equality and ensure equal representation and support for women in the Russian sports landscape.

INDIA

Sportswashing: India views sports as a vehicle for fostering national unity, pride, and showcasing its merit on the global stage. Major sporting events like the Indian Premier League (IPL) and hosting tournaments such as the Cricket World Cup have been instrumental in promoting India's image as a sporting powerhouse. The country uses these events to engage its massive population and stimulate economic growth through sports-related industries. While India focuses on the positive aspects of sports, some critics argue that the emphasis on sporting events might overshadow underlying societal issues, diverting attention from concerns like social inequalities and infrastructure development. Nevertheless, India perceives sports as a unifying force and an avenue for socio-economic development, despite occasional scrutiny regarding potential sportswashing implications.

Gender Equality: India's perspective on gender equality in sports highlights the importance of providing equal opportunities and support for female athletes. The country acknowledges the achievements of women athletes across various sports and has seen a rise in their participation and

success in international competitions. Efforts have been made to promote gender parity in sports by introducing initiatives that focus on training, facilities, and financial support for women in sports. However, challenges remain, including cultural barriers, lack of resources, and unequal media representation, which hinder the advancement of gender equality in Indian sports. Despite these obstacles, India continues to emphasize the importance of empowering and encouraging female athletes, aiming to create a more inclusive and equitable environment in the realm of sports.

CHINA

Sportswashing: China views sports as a crucial tool for projecting its global influence. Hosting major sporting events like the 2008 Beijing Olympics and investments in sports leagues and franchises are seen as opportunities to showcase China's economic and technological advancements on the world stage. The country uses sports as a means to bolster its international image, promoting unity, patriotism, and national pride among its citizens. However, critics argue that China's involvement in sports may be utilized to divert attention from human rights¹⁷ abuses, such as the treatment of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang or crackdowns on dissent. Despite scrutiny, China continues to emphasize the positive impact of sports in fostering social cohesion and international engagement.

Gender Equality: In recent years, China has made notable progress in promoting sports, striving to make them more accessible and inclusive. The country has invested heavily in infrastructure, training programs, and grassroots initiatives, providing opportunities for both male and female athletes to excel in various sports. While efforts have been made to enhance accessibility, cultural challenges remain, and critics argue that there is still a lot of work to be done in ensuring equal opportunities and resources for women in sports. The question of equal pay in Chinese women's sports has also been a topic of discussion, with ongoing efforts to bridge disparities. However, criticisms have surfaced, pointing to lingering gender biases. As China continues to make strides in the realm of women's sports, the conversation around inclusivity, equal opportunities, and fair compensation remains integral to shaping the future of sports in the country.

CANADA

Sportswashing: Canada has hosted numerous major international sporting events, like the Vancouver Winter Olympics in 2010, showcasing its organizational capacity and cultural richness. Canada emphasizes the positive impact of sports in fostering community engagement, physical health, and social cohesion. While using sports as a means to celebrate athleticism and unity, Canada remains committed to upholding ethical standards and human rights, distancing itself from deliberate attempts to use sports as a shield to divert attention from contentious issues. Overall, Canada sees sports as a vehicle for positive social change and international cooperation rather than a tool for deliberate sportswashing endeavors.

¹⁷ Source: [US Department of State](#)

Gender Equality: Canada has demonstrated a commitment to advancing women's sports through targeted initiatives and support. The Canadian government, alongside organizations like the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS), has actively worked to make women's sports more accessible. Specific examples include the "Gender Equity in Sport Research Hub," a project launched by CAAWS to address gender-based issues in Canadian sports. Moreover, the Canadian Women's Hockey League (CWHL) and the National Women's Hockey League (NWHL) have seen increased recognition, signaling growing support for women's hockey. Canada's progress in women's sports showcases a commitment to inclusivity, but the country faces the ongoing task of addressing specific challenges to ensure equal footing for women in the sporting arena.

INDONESIA

Sportswashing: Indonesia's perspective on sportswashing involves utilizing sports as a means of projecting national pride, unity, and showcasing its rich cultural heritage. The country has hosted various international sporting events like the Asian Games, aiming to bolster its global image and promote tourism. Indonesia perceives sports as a tool for economic development, fostering a sense of patriotism, and promoting healthy lifestyles among its citizens. While Indonesia celebrates its sporting achievements, some suggest these events might overshadow deeper social or political issues, such as human rights¹⁸ concerns or infrastructure development challenges.

Gender Equality: In Indonesia, progress in women's sports has seen notable developments with increased initiatives and investments. The country has taken steps to make women's sports more accessible through programs like the "Pekan Olahraga Pelajar Nasional" (National Student Sports Week), encouraging young girls to participate in various sports. Specific sports federations, such as the Indonesian Women's Football Association (ASBWI), have actively worked to elevate the status of women in sports. Criticisms point to disparities in resources and opportunities for female athletes. While there is progress, the country continues to navigate the path toward ensuring equal access, opportunities, and support for women in sports, emphasizing the need for sustained efforts and awareness.

AUSTRALIA

Sportswashing: Australia sees sports as integral to its national identity, promoting values of fair play, competition, and inclusivity. The country has hosted major international sporting events like the Olympics and Commonwealth Games, using them as opportunities to showcase its organizational capabilities and cultural diversity. Australia emphasizes the positive role of sports in community engagement, health promotion, and fostering social cohesion. While celebrating sporting achievements, Australia remains vigilant against using sports as a deliberate tool for deflecting attention from significant issues, maintaining a commitment to transparency and human rights. Overall, Australia values sports as a unifying force but remains cautious to prevent its misuse as a shield for sportswashing practices.

Gender Equality: Australia has been at the forefront of advancing women's sports, with dedicated efforts to increase accessibility and support. The country's National Women's Soccer League (W-League)

¹⁸ Source: [US Embassy in Indonesia](#)

has been a trailblazer, providing a platform for female footballers to showcase their skills and gain recognition. Initiatives like the "Change Our Game" campaign in Victoria aim to boost female participation in sports and leadership roles, fostering a more inclusive sporting culture. Australia has seen significant strides in cricket as well, with the Women's Big Bash League (WBBL) gaining popularity and contributing to the growth of women's cricket. The country has been proactive in addressing gender pay gaps in sports, with organizations like Cricket Australia taking steps to ensure equal pay for male and female national team players. Despite these positive steps, critiques have been raised regarding media coverage disparities and the need for continued efforts to eliminate gender biases in sports. Australia's journey in women's sports showcases substantial progress, yet ongoing commitment is crucial to achieving comprehensive gender equality in the sporting landscape.

BRAZIL

Sportswashing: Hosting major events like the FIFA World Cup in 2014 and the Rio Olympics in 2016 was seen as an opportunity to display Brazil's passion for sports, hospitality, and organizational capabilities to the world. The country promotes the positive impact of sports in fostering unity, celebrating diversity, and promoting tourism and economic growth. However, criticisms have emerged, suggesting that these mega-events were used to mask deeper socio-economic issues, such as inequality, infrastructure challenges, and displacement of communities. Despite these accusations Brazil remains firm that they utilize sports as a tool with which they display their country's values.

Gender Equality: In Brazil, strides have been made to advance women's sports with numerous initiatives. The country has a strong soccer tradition, and the Brazilian Women's Soccer League (Brasileirão Feminino) has gained momentum, contributing to the growth of women's soccer. Specific programs, like the "Meninas Olímpicas" (Olympic Girls) initiative, aim to empower young girls through sports participation, focusing on fostering talent and providing equal opportunities. Additionally, Brazil has witnessed the rise of female athletes in sports like volleyball and track, with stars like Marta Vieira da Silva setting records and inspiring the next generation. Despite these achievements, gender disparities persist, and challenges in resource distribution and recognition for female athletes remain. Criticisms often center on the need for greater investment, equal pay, and increased media coverage for women in sports.

MEXICO

Sportswashing: Mexico regards sports as a crucial avenue to showcase its cultural vibrancy and athletic prowess on the global stage. The country has hosted major sporting events such as the FIFA World Cup in 1970 and 1986, and more recently the Mexico F1 Grand Prix, utilizing these occasions to display its organizational capacity and sport culture. Mexico emphasizes the positive impact of sports in bringing international attention, community engagement, and economic opportunities through tourism. However, criticisms have arisen, suggesting that while celebrating sporting achievements, these events might overshadow pressing social issues like poverty, crime, and human rights¹⁹ concerns.

¹⁹ Source: USAID

Gender Equality: In Mexico, women in sports are gaining more recognition and support, thanks to specific efforts and achievements. The Liga MX Femenil, the women's football league, has played a pivotal role in elevating women's soccer in the country. Initiatives like "Vamos Por Todas" (Let's Go For All), launched by the Mexican Football Federation, aim to promote women's football at various levels, encouraging greater participation from a young age. Notable Mexican female athletes, such as Mariana Avitia in archery and Paola Longoria in racquetball, have achieved international success as well. Criticisms have surfaced regarding the need for sustained efforts to address disparities in resources and equal pay.

FRANCE

Sportswashing: Hosting major events like the 1998 FIFA World Cup and the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, France has a deep-rooted passion for sports, and these events serve as a means to celebrate its unity, national pride, and the spirit of competition. The country emphasizes they believe that hosting such prestigious events allows them to strengthen diplomatic ties and demonstrate their commitment to global cooperation. However, critics have raised concerns, pointing to the violent riots the country has seen over the past few years and terrorist attacks on some sporting events. Despite these critiques, France asserts that hosting major sporting events allows them to project their values of liberty, equality, and fraternity to the world, contributing to a narrative of a vibrant and inclusive nation.

Gender Equality: In France, the progression of women's sports is evident. The French Women's Division 1 Féminine has played a pivotal role in elevating women's football, and government-backed programs like "Sport Pour Elles" (Sports for Them) aim to encourage more girls and women to engage in sports. The success of French female athletes, such as Pauline Ferrand-Prévoit in cycling and Wendie Renard in football, has contributed to the growing visibility of women in French sports. Despite these positive strides, criticisms have been raised regarding gender pay disparities and media coverage inequalities, signaling the need for continued efforts to address these challenges and foster a more equitable environment for women in sports.

GERMANY

Sportswashing: Germany generally maintains a cautious approach regarding sportswashing, emphasizing ethical practices and human rights in sports. The country values sports as a means to promote international cooperation, fair play, and inclusivity. While Germany has hosted major sporting events like the FIFA World Cup in 2006 and the Olympics, these events were aimed at showcasing the country's organizational prowess and cultural heritage rather than deflecting attention from contentious issues. German sports organizations and authorities prioritize transparency and ethical conduct, distancing themselves both from deliberate sportswashing strategies often associated with nations facing human rights scrutiny and from their problematic past.²⁰ Overall, Germany aims to leverage sports for positive international engagement, emphasizing values of integrity and fair competition.

Gender Equality: In Germany, women's sports have experienced a significant boost, notably with the success of the Frauen-Bundesliga. The league has become a powerhouse, featuring top-tier talent and

²⁰ Source: [Britannica](#)

increasing visibility for female soccer players. The "FFrauen im Fokus" (Women in Focus) initiative promotes female participation in sports. Successful German female athletes, such as Denise Herrmann in biathlon and Alexandra Popp in football, have garnered national and international acclaim. The next steps focus on bridging unequal pay and expanding media coverage for women in sports. As Germany continues to champion women's sports, there is a growing call to address these challenges comprehensively and ensure equitable opportunities and recognition for female athletes.

SOUTH AFRICA

Sportswashing: South Africa, host of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, saw the event as a post-apartheid milestone, showcasing progress and unity. Critics voiced concerns about the cost and community displacement during stadium construction. They also saw the event as exacerbating terrorist activities, riots, supply chain disruptions, health epidemics, fraud, and financial losses. The country tries to maintain their stance that none of this negatively affected the well-being of citizens in South Africa, and continue to try and push for

Gender Equality: South Africa has made significant strides in promoting professional women's teams in the last few years. The development of their sports programs in preparation for the World Cup has had a great impact on the amount of sports opportunities for women, and it has paid dividends. The success of the SA women's soccer team at the most recent African Cup of Nations, as well as the emergence of women athletes from various sports like Rugby, Netball, and other Olympic sports. Like many other nations, there is a large call for more media attention but the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee have promised more growth over the next few years.

EGYPT

Sportswashing: Egypt views sports, particularly football (soccer), as a cornerstone of national identity and a source of immense pride for its citizens. The country values sporting achievements as a reflection of its prowess and passion on an international platform. Hosting events like the Africa Cup of Nations is seen as an opportunity to display Egypt's organizational abilities and cultural richness, aiming to attract tourism and global attention. However, critics have suggested that this intense focus on sporting successes might overshadow or divert attention from pressing societal issues like human rights²¹ concerns and economic challenges. Despite occasional scrutiny, Egypt continues to prioritize sports as a means of projecting national pride and unity on the global stage

Gender Equality: Egypt has encountered several setbacks in achieving gender equality in sports. Cultural norms and societal expectations often prioritize male participation in sports, resulting in limited opportunities for women. Female athletes may face challenges accessing training facilities, resources, and coaching compared to their male counterparts. Gender stereotypes and traditional roles can discourage girls and women from pursuing sports careers or participating in certain disciplines. Overcoming these setbacks necessitates challenging existing norms, promoting equal opportunities, and creating a supportive environment to encourage female participation and advancement in sports. Despite the

²¹ Source: [US Embassy in Egypt](#)

setbacks, Efforts to promote female participation have resulted in a slight increase in representation of women in various sports, mainly soccer at both at the national and international levels.

JAPAN

Sportswashing: While Japan has actively embraced hosting major sporting events, such as the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, to showcase its technological prowess and hospitality, there is a careful balancing act. The Japanese government aims to highlight its cultural richness and organizational efficiency rather than using sports as a tool to divert attention from contentious political matters. However, many argue that the hosting of mega-events have inadvertently contributed to sportswashing, particularly when concerns like the Fukushima nuclear disaster and historical disputes with neighboring countries have taken the spotlight.²²

Gender Equality: Especially recently, Japan has shown a real desire to showcase gender equality in sport. The Tokyo 2020 Olympics marked a historic milestone as the most gender-balanced Games in history, featuring nearly 49% of athletes being women. The Japanese government has dedicated considerable funds to support sports development programs through the Japanese Sports Agency (文部科学省), contributing to the establishment of projects for women's sports, grassroots initiatives, and youth academies nationwide.²³ There is still a struggle to get media attention onto Japanese women's sports, as there is with getting them into the professional world in general, but significant strides have been made.

SPAIN

Sportswashing: Spain hasn't necessarily been involved in sportswashing itself, but has been accused of encouraging it on many occasions. The country faced criticism for hosting the 2019 Supercopa de España football tournament in Saudi Arabia, raising concerns about human rights abuses and the Saudi government's attempt to divert attention through sports. Additionally, Spain's La Liga has been involved in controversial partnerships. Their deal with the Chinese-owned company Mediapro, for example, drew attention to concerns about the league becoming a tool for political influence.²⁴ The Royal Spanish Athletics Federation maintains that they have a clean record themselves with sportswashing, but many have pressed for more accountability, urging the government to more carefully evaluate sports partnerships.

Gender Equality: Spain has made notable strides in promoting gender equality in sports; they have introduced measures to ensure equal pay for male and female athletes in national teams and the Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) endorsed a sports law that mandates a minimum of 40% female representation in the leadership of all sports organizations to ensure gender parity.²⁵ However, the initiatives have been overlooked by controversy surrounding the Spanish women's soccer team. Many female players boycotted the 2023 Women's World Cup after RFEF president, Luis Rubiales, kissed player Jenni Hermoso on the lips nonconsensually at the World Cup presentation ceremony. The incident

²² Source: [Medium](#)

²³ Source: [Pixellot](#)

²⁴ Source: [Al Jazeera](#)

²⁵ Source: [Reuters](#)

has sparked debate worldwide about the effectiveness of Spain's initiatives, and whether they need to be working harder to eliminate the apparent "macho" nature of sports in the country.

DENMARK

Sportswashing: Denmark has exhibited a critical stance against sportswashing, particularly in the context of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. The Danish government has expressed concerns about hosting the tournament in Qatar, citing human rights issues and the treatment of migrant workers. Denmark's perspective emphasizes the importance of ethical considerations and social responsibility in international sports engagements. The country has called for increased transparency and reform in the bidding process for hosting major events to ensure adherence to human rights standards. Denmark's position reflects a commitment to using its influence in the sports community to advocate for positive change and promote ethical practices in the global sporting landscape.²⁶

Gender Equality: Denmark promotes equal opportunities for both male and female athletes, emphasizing fair representation in leadership roles and coaching positions. Denmark has implemented measures to ensure gender parity, addressing disparities in areas such as pay and resource allocation. The government actively supports programs that encourage female participation in sports, from grassroots initiatives to elite competitions. However, despite the participation rate of women in sport and physical activity being 41%, the female board members of Danish sports federations count for only 21%.²⁷ There is a huge call to increase female leadership and participation in the top of the sport by critics and the media.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Sportswashing: The United Arab Emirates (UAE), like many of its Gulf State neighbors, has engaged in sportswashing in an attempt to increase its global presence and reputation. The UAE hosts Formula One's annual Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. Members of the UAE's royal family also hold a majority stake in City Football Group, which owns Manchester City F.C. Through these investments, the UAE hopes to diversify its wealth away from oil and to distract from criticism over labor conditions, migrant worker rights, and political repression in the country.²⁸

Gender Equality: According to the UAE government, "gender equality is of paramount importance" and women are "guarantee[d] equal rights" in the country.²⁹ According to Human Rights Watch, however, women still face significant discrimination in the UAE. According to the International Monetary Fund, for example, less than 60% of women were employed in the UAE, compared to over 90% of men. Sporting opportunities for women are increasing in the UAE as the government invests more in producing and hosting female talent.

MOROCCO

²⁶ Source: [Eurosport](#)

²⁷ Source: [Council of Europe](#)

²⁸ Source: [Politico](#)

²⁹ Source: [UAE Washington, DC Embassy](#)

Sportswashing: Morocco captivated the world during the 2022 World Cup in Qatar by becoming the most successful Arab nation and the most successful African nation in World Cup history, ultimately finishing in fourth place. Morocco has been accused of using this football success to cover up controversies, including its illegal annexation of Western Sahara. In 2017, AC Milan opened an academy in Laayoune, the largest city in Western Sahara but described it as in Morocco.³⁰

Gender Equality: Morocco has invested heavily in building its women's football team, which made it to the Women's World Cup in 2023.³¹ The country still has a ways to go, however, in convincing the public that women's sports are worth playing, watching, and investing in. Outside of football, Moroccan men and women have historically done well in middle-distance running and boxing.

PAKISTAN

Sportswashing: Cricket is the most popular sport in Pakistan and is deeply entwined in politics. India and Pakistan's fierce geopolitical rivalry spills onto the pitch and, conversely, so called "cricket diplomacy" has been used to ease tensions between the two nations. Imran Khan, the embattled former prime minister of Pakistan, gained national prominence as the captain of the nation's cricket team. All this focus on cricket has led Pakistan to neglect other sports, leading to declining success in squash and field hockey, sports which it once excelled at. Pakistan also suffers from other nations' sportswashing efforts. Many Pakistanis, seeking higher wages, travel to gulf states such as Qatar and the UAE for work, only to be forced into indentured servitude. Thousands of Pakistanis have died in Qatar since 2010, many working on construction projects for the Qatar World Cup.³²

Gender Equality: Women's sports receive significantly less funding than men's in Pakistan. "Women have been traditionally excluded from participating in sports" in Pakistan and even today, societal stigma and a lack of government investment makes participation difficult.³³ As in many other countries around the globe, increasing gender equality in sports in Pakistan will require both a change in societal expectations and increased opportunities and funding for female leagues and athletes.

³⁰ Source: [Medium](#)

³¹ Source: [Al Jazeera](#)

³² Source: [The Guardian](#)

³³ Source: [Daily Times](#)