

Pele en Desmond Tutu ambassadors of the Flanders Peace Field

This morning the British Ambassador H.E. **Jonathan Brenton** and his German colleague H.E.dr **Eckart Cuntz** assisted at the breaking ground ceremony of the Flanders Peace Field, an international project of soccer and peace. The ceremony was attended by sir **Willi Lemke**, Special Adviser for sport, Peace and development to the United Nations; **Lord Michael Bates** who in the light of the coming Olympic games of 2012 is doing Walk for Truce from Athens to London; the Irish Peace activist and publicist **Don Mullan**; and **François De Keersmaecker**, Chairman of the Royal Football League; **Sandy Evrard**, the mayor of Messines; and **Marcella Smyth**, first secretary of the Embassy of Ireland.

Pele, for many the best soccer player ever and ex-ambassador for Unicef and Unesco, has agreed to act as international ambassador for the Flanders Peace Field. Pele also gave his name and support to Little Prince Hospital in Curitiba, the biggest children's hospital in Latin America. Archbishop **Desmond Tutu**, Nobel prize winner for Peace in 1984 for his struggle against Apartheid in South-Africa, also confirmed that he will be an international ambassador for the project.

Christmas Truce Event

The town of Messines, the Peace Village and Open Stadium (social organisation for Belgian soccer) have, in the light of the hundred years of remembrance of the Great war, joined forces to start a project that focuses on the Christmas Truce of 1914.

In 2014 A Christmas Truce Event will be held, close to the location where soldiers fraternised and played soccer during Christmas 1914. There will be an international soccer tournament for national youth teams, this with the help of **KVK Ieper**; and an exhibition match with players of the **Jupiler Pro League**; and concluding an international remembrance event with soccer stars from all over the globe.

Sustainable Peace Project

With this event a sustainable project on Peace education and community development is also starting ; where the power of soccer is used as a tool to give a positive peace message to young people. The Christmas Truce was a day of hope in a horrific war that lasted for 4 long years and caused death of more than 10 million people. The project aims at an international public of young people. Youngsters from all over the World, schools, sporting teams and youth movements will get the chance to play a soccer match on the Flanders Peace Field in Messines and help develop Peace.

Peace Village will refurbish the existing soccer pitch to a top notch football accommodation with an extra practice pitch. In the hostel the Peace message of the Christmas Truce will be visualised in a interactive way with a permanent exhibition, films and documentaries.

Besides the organization of football camps, the Peace Village, also organizes 'Peace Camps'. In this project football will be the lever to propagate the concepts of fair play and solidarity. On the 'Christmas Truce Event', which will continue in 2014, youth soccer teams along with Israeli and Palestinian youngster, will participate in the first Peace Program. Flanders Peace Field will also organize an annual tournament in the context of the Global Peace Games, an initiative of the United Nations. By this way the world of football wishes to draw attention to the problems of the third and fourth world. Sport, peace and development are the common threads throughout the project of the Flanders Peace Field.

Partners

Open Stadium and the Peace Village jointly provide a file to the Flemish Community to help achieve the realization of the Flanders Peace Field.

The Peace Village was founded in 2006 as a residential centre for youth. Currently the centre has a capacity of 128 beds. It offers young people a temporary stay so that they can get out of their 'natural' oppressive environment (either due to war or conflict, poverty, disintegration, despair, ...) and discover new horizons. A process of (peace) education is much more than academic training, it is also an experience which involves music, sports and games. In the longer term, the Peace Village wishes to develop a peace centre for young people in conflict areas, and engage in community building and support.

Open Stadium is the social representative of the Belgian football and is controlled by the Royal Belgian Football Association, the Pro League and the National Football League. The organization promotes football initiatives, which have the property to emotionally engage people, to use their power for the benefit of society. "More than a club" is the central idea of Open Stadium. In football, all attention goes to the 11 men on the field. Open Stadium tries to stimulate Football clubs to think about the place they will give to the 12th (the fans) and the 13th man (the community).

The Belgian Football Association, the Pro League and the National Football League will make an effort to give the Flanders Peace Field Project an international emission. An annual Christmas Truce Lecture will be held by a person with an international reputation. In the 2014 edition, we are honoured to invite Pele.

Wall of Peace

At a to be specified location in Messines, the partners of this project with the support of the Flemish Community, are going to establish a lasting monument. It will be a 'Wall of Peace' that unlike other 'walls' will be characterized by transparency and openness. On this wall, national and international guests of honor of the Christmas Truces may print their palm of their hand. The monument will also give an extra tourist value to Messines.

An international competition will be held, artists from different countries will be able to submit a project. An expert jury will select the winning project. Afterwards an exhibition, which will expose all submitted projects, is going to be set up.

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