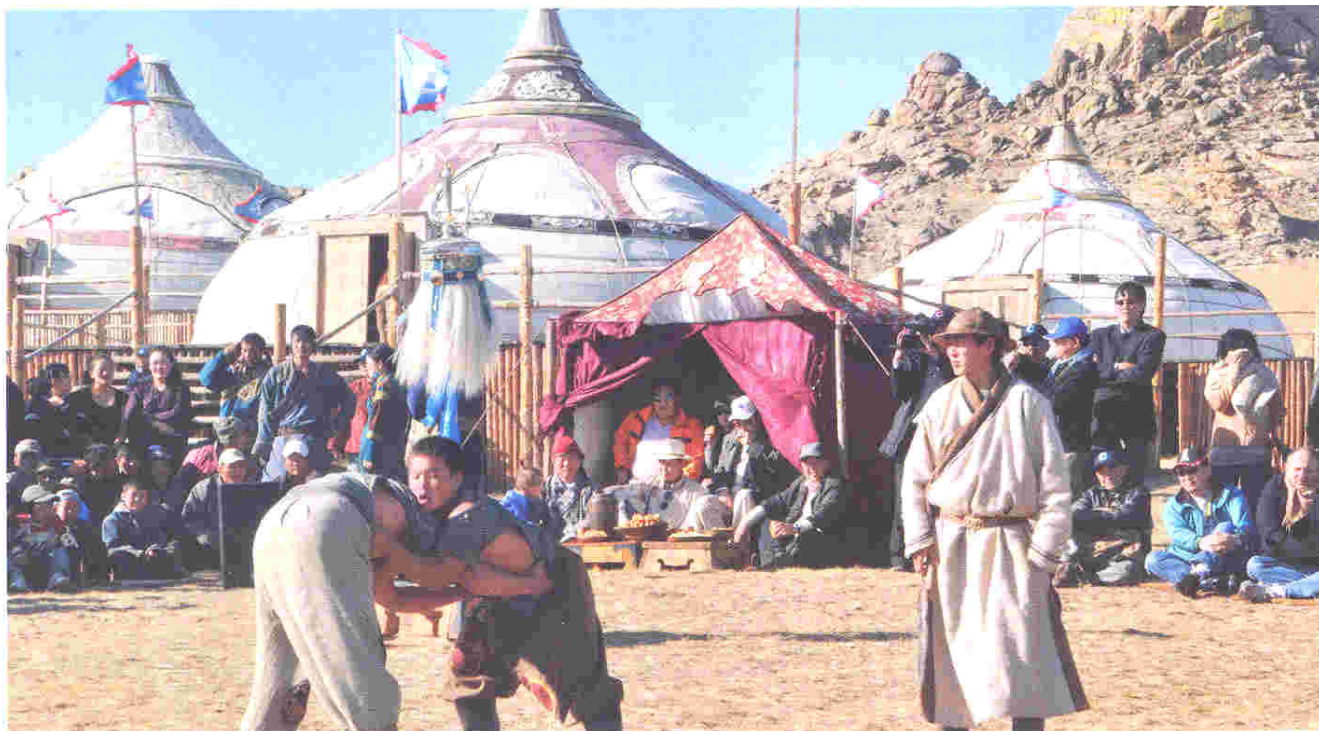


A day of eye-opening Mongolian experiences



ABU delegates witness traditional Mongolian wrestling



Delegates enjoying a sumptuous traditional Mongolian lunch

A one-day tour to the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar was held on 4 October. It was a good day for excursion – the clear blue sky, what Mongolia is known for, and the cold but crisp weather at 6 °C.

The first stop ABU members made was the Chinggis Khaan statue complex.

The still to be completed tourism site features a 40-meter high Chinggis Khaan that's covered in 250 tonnes of steel. ABU members were able to take the only elevator in the complex and witness an impressive panoramic view over the complex area and the scenery beyond.

It was perfect timing for the ABU members to pay a visit as it had only opened for the public in September. When completed in 2010, the complex will be surrounded by an impressive development of over 200 ger camps and

modern Mongolians dressed and 'live' the once tribes' lifestyles with trading coins from the 13th century and a spa, hotel and golf course.

Before heading 100 kilometers east of Ulaanbaatar to the 13th Century national park, where the ABU members spent most of their day the tour visited a Relay Station for a glimpse of ancient Mongolian tribes' lifestyles and a typical ger camp. Members were told that most of the Mongolian population living outside of the cities is still living this traditional lifestyle as nomads.

Next stop was the national park where ABU members enjoyed scrumptious traditional Mongolian cuisine under a colourful giant circus tent. Members were entertained by a variety of traditional Mongolian dance and song performances as well as their world renowned talent – the contortionists show.

Then it was a walk to the King's Palace where ABU members experienced the Mongolian 'Three Men Sport': wrestling, archery and horse racing.

Here members formed a circle and patiently watched how young Mongolian men in traditional warrior clothing fought their way up the final glory.

The qualifying process involves contestants in pairs to fight and take their opponents down. The last man standing wins and there is no time limit to the match.

While the long match continued, some ABU members walked to the 'riding site' nearby to take photographs with the horses and camels – and some took rides as well.

As the sun dimmer, members were escorted by the local police back to their hotels.

It was an activities packed, eye-opening Mongolian experience, before the two full days of meetings that awaited them. ●



A duet



The Chinggis Khaan statue complex



Delegates enjoy a circus performance by a team of contortionists



Delegates arrive at the Chinggis Khaan statue complex



Some delegates trying their hands at archery



A traditional Mongolian folklore performance

Use sport to save obese children

The ABU Director of Sport, John Barton, recently addressed the Sports Assembly of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). His address is a familiar theme the ABU Sports Group has been focusing on over some years: using sport to help overcome childhood obesity.

Here's part of what he said.

"I want to talk about the present and a collaborative project between the ABU and the EBU which will give us a wonderful platform upon which we can deliver on our corporate social responsibilities.

CSR, as it's known, is now an integral part of the charters of many state broadcasters, and more and more private sector ones as well who are now recognising that they too have CSR obligations.

In fact many of the larger international broadcasters have established CSR committees in recent years, and are becoming active in promoting social awareness and supporting community causes.

I want to share with you a project that our group wants to support in the coming years, one where they feel they can make a great

Teenagers are now entering adulthood grossly overweight, and suffering from the ravages of related diseases, more so than at any other time in our history.

During my research I discovered that the more 'developed' a country became, the more people ate fast foods, rich in fat, high in energy density, but low in essential nutrients.

It is now a worldwide problem, one that we cannot easily walk away from as broadcasters, since far too often we have made a significant contribution to this state of affairs.

In China, 20 percent of urban children are fat. In a country where there are an estimated 300 million children, that is a devastating statistic.

The same trend is apparent in Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and so on, where the urban figures are pushing beyond 15 percent according to reliable statistics and research papers.

And it is the rapid growth of these numbers that has governments staring at a full blown medical, social and economic crisis. Asia, it seems, has taken its lead from the northern hemisphere where obesity has been a growing problem for some decade.

“Overeating and under exercising has become a global virus, one that has to be halted”

contribution to the well being of their people in general, and society in particular.

A great cause in our eyes that will see us using sport and related programming to save a generation of young people from a modern day plague: childhood obesity. And a way to further strengthen our ties with the key rights owners who, like us, have a stake in this.

While British children are more grossly overweight today than their European counterparts – 2 million children are regarded as obese or overweight in the UK – Europe is starting to catch up.

According to a report from the International Obesity Task Force, one European child in five is overweight or obese.

The task force said the highest prevalence was to be found surprisingly in the Mediterranean region. Some countries even had a higher proportion of overweight children than the United States.

Experts have noted a rapid acceleration in the increase of excess-weight and obesity prevalence: from 0.2 percent in the 70s, it is rising by 2 percent a year today, i.e. 400,000 additional overweight or obese young Europeans each year.

“One in every ten dollars goes on medical costs associated with being overweight”

"Child obesity could lead to a health disaster in the future," said David Byrne, European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection.

Were these to be one off occurrences then we would not be concerned, but they are not. Overeating and under exercising has become a global virus, one that has to be halted.

This from a research paper at Stanford University in the United States:

"If obesity among kids continues to increase, many believe this current generation of young people will become the first in American history to live shorter lives than their parents."

Kids are becoming shorter, fatter, and will, more than likely turn into obese adults with an estimated 66 percent remaining fat all their shortened lives. In America, the problem has been described as a national medical catastrophe.

Staggeringly 9 percent of all the nation's medical outlays...yes, nearly one in every ten dollars goes on medical costs associated with being overweight.

But let's go back a little in time...to a period when Americans were recognised

as the tallest race in the industrialised world a record they held for two hundred years.

Henry Fonda epitomised the times. Just after the Second World War, US males were on average 6 feet plus and the phrase "The Tall Lean American" was coined.

That is no longer the case. American males are now the shortest in the industrialised world according to a body

of research on the subject. They have shrunk since 1946 by three inches!

They are now shorter and wider. In Europe, on the other hand, in countries like Holland and Denmark the opposite is true. While much of Europe is also falling under the spell of a fast food, and low exercise regime, their young men now set the record for being the tallest in the world.

Through your relationships with sports federations, governments, and sponsors in your home countries, you are in an influential position to support initiatives in sport and exercise programmes that will take young people away from the fridge, the fast food outlets, and the video stores, and onto the playing fields, into the swimming pools, and gymnasiums.

More fast food, less exercise, and an addiction to computer games.

It is time we do something to improve their lives, to present them with other options long before they succumb to the painful outcomes associated with poor choices.

In Mongolia, our broadcasters agreed to do something positive. I would like the EBU to seriously consider joining

“ It is time we present them with other options long before they succumb to the painful outcomes associated with poor choices ”

us in this monumental but necessary challenge. In the first instance we are going to stage an international conference which we have called “SPORT : SAVING THE OBESE CHILD.”

It is our objective through a two-day to focus on the condition, the alarming trends, the social stigmas that come from being overweight, and the economic black hole that we are spinning towards.

We will enlist the support of FIFA, the IOC, and other leading sporting federations. We have already had a very positive response from the Australian government and it is possible that we will stage this

event at the Sydney Opera late next year.

We will devise a media plan that will have short term impact – commercials and key messages and statements from stakeholders.

A medium term objective with a series of tailored marketing programmes to keep engaging young people.

And a longer focus through governments, broadcasters and federations on measuring our achievements, successes and, just as importantly, keeping the focus alive.

We will draw speakers from throughout the world, experts in their fields, sporting role models, and others who are leading the fight against this disease.

This would be a joint initiative, the aim of which would be to create a lasting international focus on how best to use sport, the power of sports federations, administrators, government agencies, and perhaps even the fast food giants, to bring about critical change.

Yes, it's ambitious.

And yes, it's going to take resources and time. But as an influential industry body we must recognise the role that we should and must play in raising awareness on this critical issue.

It is the Obama philosophy of 'Yes We Can'.

Essentially what we are saying is: Sport has an important, if not decisive role to play.

Our proposed conference and workshops can make a huge difference. But it can't be achieved without your input and your support.

We will need to develop a media programme that will assist you in framing key messages for your audiences. One that, in time, we hope will turn children away from being couch potatoes feeding on burgers and fries, and into 'sports junkies' – a term that Fitness Australia uses to describe people who can achieve health, happiness and vitality in all aspects of their lives.

If we can play a role in achieving that, then we will have all made a significant step forward in meeting our corporate social responsibilities. ●

FOOTNOTE:

The EBU has agreed to support the ABU on this initiative.

ABU Sport to revamp mid-year meeting

The ABU Sports Group has agreed to re-style its most successful conference known as the Mid-Year Sports Group meeting.

After discussions at the recent meeting of members in Mongolia, there was common agreement that the two Sports Group meetings held each year should be clearly differentiated.

The ABU Director of Sport, John Barton, said the mid-year meeting offered a real opportunity to produce a conference format which was more appealing to members and outside federations and marketing organisations.

“The results going back years for the

mid-year meeting (usually held in late April, early May) have shown a clear preference for a conference style format,” he told the members.

“We have been privileged to have had some of the finest speakers in the sporting world attending the mid-year meeting, which has given it a certain lustre in the international community. It's time we built on that,” Mr Barton said.

The first edition of the new style event will be held in Colombo on 27-28 April next year. It will be hosted by the Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation (SLRC) and attended by leading government ministers, athletes and sports federations from Sri Lanka.

As well the President of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapaksa, will make an

appearance via video. He will do a feature interview with the ABU's John Barton on 'Going for Gold', the theme of the conference.

The President was a keen sportsman during his time at the exclusive St Thomas's School in Colombo.

The interview will also be shown on national television in Sri Lanka and be distributed via the ABU's File Transfer Protocol (FTP) site to other members. “We have chosen the theme 'Going for Gold' because it represents the highest aspirations of an athlete: to win Olympic gold, or to win at the Asian or Commonwealth Games,” he said.

There will also be a surprise VIP from Australia, a man regarded as one of the finest coaches in Australian Olympic and



John Barton

Commonwealth Games history, and now a much sought after speaker on the global circuit.

Watch this space!