

Award for the Sports Event for Peace of the Year:

CHAN IN IVORY COAST BY CAF

CONFEDERATION AFRICAINE DE FOOTBALL

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Football is certainly the most entertaining game of its time. Its global and media impact and its economic organisation contribute to make it one of the most important permanent events.

This planetary admiration for football explains the multi-faceted attention it gets. Beyond its festive and spectacular nature, it constitutes an undeniable social attraction because it concerns all elements of the society.

Its popularity and impact by far surpasses its practice. Football transcends different shades of opinion; it gives citizens the strong sentimental attachment of belonging to a community, which is even stronger than the tribal bond they share. National teams perfectly symbolise this sacred union and becomes an undeniable factor of social cohesion and constitutes an exceptional tool for national identity and affirmation.

Africa is, of course, not excluded from this football phenomenon. The African, as the President of the Confederation of African Football, Mr. Issa Hayatou, would say, thinks football, plays football, breathes football and lives football. Considerable progress has been recorded with the guidance of CAF in the organisation and promotion of the practice of football be it in the development of infrastructures, organisation of competitions and the training and structuring of women football, which is an element of emancipation.

The choice of organising the final phase of African National Champions in Ivory Coast did not, in reality, necessitate difficult deliberations by CAF.

History is full with examples where football was a factor of peace and witnessed the values of tolerance, progress and peace of which CAF facilitated by offering to Ivory Coast, which is torn troubled by internal crisis, the organisation of the maiden African National Championship, (dedicated to national teams comprising local players). The idea to organise a competition dedicated to local talents, an event to promote peace is impressive.

The African Cup of Nation, which CAF organises after every two years, is the biggest engine of development for the host country. During this period, Africa vibrates with passion and forgets all its woes. This competition for local talents illuminates regions battered by conflicts. It was normal for the experience to give birth to such a generous inspiration, because it concerned the first edition of CHAN. After the final of CHAN on March 8, 2009, President Hayatou expressed his satisfaction: “The choice of Ivory Coast as host country was an excellent one. I have, in the course of my stay, heard talks of national reconciliation and peace. If CAF has been able to make a contribution, in its modest way, in re-enforcing this double engagement, we can say we have succeeded in our action”.

The organisation of CHAN in Ivory Coast has brought back, since 2009, the bond which the country witnessed since the institution of a government of national unity, a bond hindered by worries of successive presidential elections. The refurbishment of Bouake and Felix Houphouet Boigny stadiums demonstrate the power of peace instigated by the CHAN on one hand, and the demarcation of ancient boundary lines during the conflict on the other. The first, especially, situated in the north in the former rebellious capital, composed of an office for referees, an anti-drugs control hall and the management of a total cost of 4,6 billion FCFA. The organising Committee of CHAN succeeded in bring together all active elements in the country in order to meet deadlines. The visit of the CAF delegation in September 2008 assessed the efforts of the organising committee in the field and its impact on the local population, and assured that it pleases neighbouring groups for gaining access to the their infrastructure. Since the African Cup of Nations of 1984, Ivory Coast has not organised an event of this magnitude.

CAF was already being criticised by novices of Africa about its bi-annual organisation of the ACN, considered to be too frequent. Our continent asked for it. Its thirst for popular jamborees is inexhaustible; occasions to illustrate its national spirit, its hospitality and its socio-cultural and economic development. CHAN responds to this demand. CHAN, organised in countries recovering from bruises of recent conflicts gives a laxative dimension of sports. It plays a healing role, reunions with oneself. The symbols made echoes. It is another big country, the Democratic Republic of Congo, weakened by its internal troubles that first won the CHAN 2009 trophy. To stay in this good route, CAF has scheduled the 2011 CHAN for Sudan. Sudanese have already expressed their pride in hosting such a competition with a human touch, which from time to time has from 8 to 16 teams participating at the final phase.

This contribution to peace by football is a source of pride for CAF and its President, Dr. Issa Hayatou, who continues to associate himself with every action which will favour inter-community dialogue.

When properly organised, football is transformed into a tool for reduction of poverty and conflicts.

Meanwhile, CAF is always committed in associating football to concerted efforts towards the socio-economic development of countries that are affiliated to and have signed an agreement with the Food and Agricultural Organisation, FAO. Moreover, the socio-economic benefits are tangible in countries that were given the opportunity to organise African National tournaments and the African Cup of Nations. These huge competitions, which involve states, stimulate the economy and contribute in implanting lasting development. Stadia, roads, airports and hotel infrastructures are developed during such competitions and benefit the local inhabitants collectively.

Football is a vector of peace and progress and CAF is committed to make these values triumph.