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SPECIAL OLYMPICS GLOBAL CENTER FOR INCLUSION IN EDUCATION

Mohamed Bin Zayed Foundation For Humanity
مؤسسة محمد بن زايد للأثر الإنساني

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THE MOHAMED BIN ZAYED FOUNDATION FOR HUMANITY PLEDGES US$11M TO SPECIAL OLYMPICS INTERNATIONAL TO EXPAND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION GLOBALLY

- The $11 million grant will support the work of the Abu Dhabi-based Special Olympics Global Center for Inclusion in Education
- The funding will scale the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools program in 10 countries and help train over 6,000 educators globally in inclusive practices
- The Center was established in 2020 by a $25 million gift given by His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE

Abu Dhabi, UAE - September 25, 2025 - The Mohamed bin Zayed Foundation for Humanity has announced an US$11 million grant to the Abu Dhabi-based Special Olympics Global Center for Inclusion in Education to significantly expand its Unified Champion Schools (UCS) initiative, a transformative program that advances social inclusion for youth with and without intellectual disabilities.

The grant will support the scaling of UCS through 10 new country programs, delivered within the initiative's 152-country network, underscoring the UAE's commitment to advancing inclusion globally.

The funding will also enable the launch of a professional development platform to train more than 6,000 educators worldwide – including teachers, coaches, and youth mentors – in effective inclusion practices. In addition, the grant will help expand the Corps of Inclusive Educators, a global network of mentors who offer peer-to-peer learning and technical assistance to teachers and school leaders, helping to embed inclusive practices into school cultures for lasting impact.

The Special Olympics Global Center for Inclusion in Education serves as a hub for global thought leadership for inclusive education through research, policy, and programming. The Center, which is based in Abu Dhabi, was established in 2020 through a $25 million gift from His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, as a legacy of the Special Olympics World Games Abu Dhabi 2019.

The renewed commitment was announced at an event hosted by the Mohamed bin Zayed Foundation for Humanity on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Attendees included H.E. Yousef Al Otaiba, UAE Ambassador to the US and member of the Special Olympics Board of Directors, H.E. Dr Tareq Al Ameri, Chairman of the UAE AID Agency; H.E. Dr Shamma Khalifa Al Mazrouei, Acting Director General of the Mohamed bin Zayed Foundation for Humanity; and Dr Timothy Shriver, Chairman of the Special Olympics International Board of Directors. Opening remarks were delivered by H.E. Sana bint Mohammed Suhail, Minister of Family, UAE.

Commenting on the announcement, H.E. Yousef Al Otaiba, UAE Ambassador to the US and member of the Special Olympics Board of Directors, said: "Under the guidance of our leadership, the UAE is committed to fostering societies where youth of all abilities are empowered and celebrated. The UAE is proud to work alongside Special Olympics to expand opportunity, advance equality, and demonstrate the power of global collaboration to create lasting change."

H.E. Dr Shamma Khalifa Al Mazrouei, Acting Director General of the Mohamed bin Zayed Foundation for Humanity, said: "This partnership reflects the UAE's belief that inclusive education has the power to transform lives, communities, and societies. We have seen firsthand how these learnings extend far beyond the classroom – shaping mindsets, harnessing potential, and inspiring positive change. With this commitment to

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the Global Center for Inclusion in Education, we further a legacy that began with the Special Olympics World Games Abu Dhabi, and is contributing to a future where every child can achieve and thrive."

Dr Timothy Shriver, Chairman of the Special Olympics International Board of Directors, said: "This landmark commitment from the Mohamed bin Zayed Foundation for Humanity is a bold affirmation of a simple but revolutionary idea: inclusion is not charity, it is transformation. With this grant, we are scaling a movement rooted in dignity, equality, and the power of young people to reshape education systems. Guided by the leadership of the UAE and as a direct legacy of the Special Olympics World Games Abu Dhabi 2019, we continue to expand inclusive education systems that enable us to realize the potential of every child."

The UCS program leverages sports and youth leadership while engaging the wider school community to transform schools into places where every student is valued, respected, and included. To date, the Global Center for Inclusion in Education has supported 2,831 Unified Champion Schools globally, engaging over 1.1 million young people and training 19,425 coaches and educators to deliver inclusive programming.

Patience Irfasha, a Special Olympics Rwanda athlete, said: "Participating in Unified Sports has changed my life. I've made friends I never would have met and learned that we all have something valuable to contribute, regardless of our abilities."

Evaluations of UCS in China, Greece Egypt, India, the United States and Kenya show consistent benefits for all participating students, including enhanced social-emotional skills; improved reading and maths scores; stronger feelings of belonging - reported by 86% of students in India and nearly all in Kenya; and significant reductions in bullying and teasing. In Greece, students were 9 to 16 times more likely to report growth in competencies such as patience, empathy, and understanding the emotions of others.

—ENDS—

About the Mohamed bin Zayed Foundation for Humanity

The Mohamed bin Zayed Foundation for Humanity is an innovative philanthropy dedicated to advancing human potential and opportunity. Anchored in Emirati values, we invest in the building blocks of human progress to enable underserved individuals, families, and communities to thrive. Today, the Foundation is focused on pioneering sustainable progress in global health and inclusive development, delivering meaningful change for this generation and those to come.

The Mohamed bin Zayed Foundation for Humanity is an affiliate of Erth Zayed Philanthropies.

For more information, visit: www.mohamedbinzayedfoundation.org

Media contact: media@mohamedbinzayedfoundation.org

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About Special Olympics Global Center for Inclusion in Education

The Special Olympics Global Center for Inclusion in Education, based in Abu Dhabi, serves as a hub for global thought leadership for inclusive education through research, policy, and programming. Its mission is dedicated to the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in academic, sports, social, and community activities.

About Special Olympics

Founded in 1968, Special Olympics is a global sports movement to end discrimination against people with intellectual disabilities. We foster acceptance of all people through the power of sport and programming in education, health and leadership. With more than 4.6 million athletes and Unified Sports® partners and over one million coaches and volunteers in more than 200 countries and territories, Special Olympics offers over 30 Olympic-type sports and delivers more than 60,000 games and competitions each year.

Engage with us on: X, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn.

For more information, visit: www.SpecialOlympics.org

Media contact: sogc@placecomms.com

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