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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2025: DR LEILA GYENESEI (HUN)

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The International Olympic Committee's theme for International Women's Day 2025 is #SportForAllWomenAndGirls. Why is it important to provide equal opportunities for all women and girls in sports worldwide?

As a mother of a young daughter, a former elite athlete and a sports diplomat, I wholeheartedly endorse this initiative. It is encouraging to observe that the entire international Olympic community prioritises the attainment of complete equality.

Reflecting on your own time as an athlete, how far has the gender equality movement come since then, and how far do we still have to go?

Upon my membership in the senior Hungarian national team, I was granted the opportunity to compete in the Olympics. This marked a substantial advancement, as from 1912 to 1996, only men were permitted to participate in modern pentathlon at the Olympic Games.

Sydney was the inaugural occasion when women were permitted to participate. According to Pierre de Coubertin, modern pentathlon was a measure of masculinity, which is why we had a long way to go before women could also access the Olympic Games.

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As a sports leader, how much are you motivated to show other women and girls that there are pathways in this field?

Sports taught me about life. It is the experience and the skills developed over the decades that I can effectively utilise in my life after retirement.

In sports broadcasting, I can develop a unique perspective, as I have experienced every emotion that sports can provide as an athlete, allowing me to empathise with competitors as a reporter.

As a sports diplomat, I can advocate for athletes, and my goal is to use my media experience to help active sportspeople become true role models.

Additionally, I want to highlight the opportunity in sports diplomacy and leadership as an alternative career path for women. However, even today, there are still more men than women in decision-making bodies of most sports organisations.

What do you see as the main inequalities affecting women and girls in sport at the present time, either in your country or worldwide?

I still see both locally and globally that the opportunity for a sports career is more appealing to boys than girls. The fight for equality, however, presents us with challenges in many regions around the world. Moreover, there are significant differences in incomes, as there are no women among the highest-paid athletes even in 2025.

Do you have any suggestions for policies or actions that might address these inequalities?

It is crucial that we address these issues and confront inequalities head-on. We must continue on the path toward cultural equality, ensuring everyone has equal opportunities to pursue a sports career and maintain their professional journey, even as mothers.

For women, elite sport presents unique challenges, but through the inspiring examples of champions like Michelle Gulyás and Elodie Clouvel, we can make elite sports truly appealing and accessible to girls worldwide. Their success stories demonstrate that with proper support systems and changing cultural attitudes, women can excel at the highest levels of athletic achievement.

About the author

Name: Dr Leila Gyenesei OLY

UIPM position: Executive Board Member for Media

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Biography: Two-time Olympian, two-time world champion, three-time European champion athlete. Sports and entertainment presenter and producer at Network4 Media Group in Hungary.