

**Talking Points For
Ambassador Zumwalt's Meeting
With Senegalese Special Olympic Athletes
June 23 @ 4 Pm in The MPR**

Professeur Assane Fall, President of the Senegal Special Olympics Committee

Madame Rajah Sy, National Director of the Special Olympics Committee

Général Mouhamadou Lamine Keïta, Vice-President of the Special Olympics Committee

Raphaël Agopomé, Member of the Board of the Special Olympics Committee

Makha Racine Sy, Member of the Board of the Special Olympics Committee

Members of the Special Olympics Committee

Coaches

And most particularly Athletes!

It is such a pleasure to host you here in the U.S. Embassy today.

Ousmane, I want to say a special thank you to you today for standing up and greeting me on behalf of the athletes.

You and your fellow athletes are fantastic!

I am proud that the United States will host the 2015 Special Olympics in Los Angeles.

You are leaving on an exciting adventure and I am certain that you will be received in Los Angeles with warm American-style hospitality – an American Teranga.

You will be joined in Los Angeles by over 7,000 athletes and 3,000 coaches representing 177 countries.

There will be 30,000 volunteers and 500,000 spectators.

Those are big numbers!

What this means is that the Los Angeles Special Olympics will be the largest sporting event anywhere in the world this year.

But this is not just about numbers – it is about the spirit of the games!

That spirit is enthusiasm, teamwork, joy and displays of courage and skill.

The games are also a chance to show your talents and capabilities to the world.

With your help, we will open people's eyes and change attitudes towards folks like you.

The Los Angeles games will include special events for global discussions and action on breaking down barriers that exclude you from the mainstream community.

You may know that President Obama and his wife, Michelle Obama, are the honorary chairpersons of the Los Angeles Special Olympics.

Let me tell you what President Obama said last year at the White House to a group of American athletes

“What the Special Olympics is all about – it is about overcoming obstacles with love, and kindness, and generosity, and healthy competition. It's about pride, and it's about teamwork, and it's about friendship. And it's about treating everybody with dignity, and giving everybody a chance.”

I'd like to thank your coaches and leaders and the Senegalese government for supporting Senegalese athletes in the Special Olympics.

Just over a week ago, you held your own Special Olympics event in Dakar with almost 1,600 athletes from across Senegal.

That is amazing – through you, I'd like to send out a congratulations to all your fellow athletes who I know are supporting you as represent them in Los Angeles.

And I wish you well in Los Angeles! Most of all, I hope you have fun and that you make new friends with your colleagues from across the world.

Thank you.