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## **Carl Lewis and Billie Jean King Kick Off Torch Relay Run to Promote Harmony**

### Hundreds of Thousands to Participate in 100 Countries

NEW YORK (April 10) – The World Harmony Run will launch its 100-nation, 50-state torch relay at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza (47th Street between 1st and 2nd Ave) on Thursday, April 10th at 1 pm, when track-and-field legend and 9-time Olympic gold medalist Carl Lewis and tennis champion and social change advocate Billie Jean King carry the Torch for World Harmony.

Starting at 11:50 am, dozens of runners will make their way with police escort from Robert Wagner Jr. Park at Battery Place through the mid-town Manhattan lunch-hour traffic to Dag Hammarskjold Plaza at 1:00 pm where United Nations Ambassadors, celebrities, athletes and children will gather for speeches and celebration. Musical performances, a Parade of Nations, lighting of torches for each continent and words of encouragement from diplomats and dignitaries will highlight the ceremony.

The World Harmony Run travels the world to encourage goodwill at the local level. Simultaneous events occur in some 100 nations throughout North and South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia. Since the inaugural Run in 1987, more than five-million people have participated. Endorsements over the years have come from many world figures, including President Nelson Mandela, President Mikhail Gorbachev, Pope John Paul II, Mother Teresa, The U.S. Conference of Mayors, as well as dozens of members of Congress, governors and mayors.

Carl Lewis, spokesman for the Run, said, “By carrying the Torch, millions of citizens are taking a step for Harmony and bridging the cultural and social boundaries that separate nation from nation. By covering so many thousands of miles on foot, these courageous runners will encourage countless young people to transcend our differences and, instead, embrace our common aspiration for a better world.”

The World Harmony Run was inspired by the late visionary Sri Chinmoy as a way of offering citizens a dynamic way to express their own hopes and dreams for a more harmonious world. An athlete, philosopher, artist, musician and poet, Sri Chinmoy dedicated his life to advancing the ideals of world harmony and said, “If we have perseverance, then that is our first step towards world harmony.”

An estimated 50,000 school children in over 1,000 cities and towns on the US route are expected to participate when World Harmony Run team visits their schools. Runners will offer educational classroom presentations that promote self-esteem and friendship. At stops along the route runners will celebrate the goal of world harmony as well as recognize people in the community who work towards it.

The European leg of the relay began in Rome, Italy on March 27th where UN Ambassador of Sport and marathoner Tegla Loroupe, and actress and humanitarian Gina Lollobrigida, launched a 7-month World Harmony Run through 49 European nations that will conclude in October, in Prague, Czech Republic.

The US portion will complete its journey in mid-August in New York City.

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