

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL APPOINTS MASAI UJIRI AS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS ADVOCATE

Masai Ujiri, Giants of Africa co-founder & former Raptors president, named UN SDG Advocate ahead of the 80th UN General Assembly.

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, August 28, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Ahead of the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has appointed Masai Ujiri as a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Advocate. Ujiri, Co-Founder of Giants of Africa and Zaria Group and former Vice-Chairman and President of the Toronto Raptors, joins a distinguished group of influential leaders and changemakers who support the Secretary-General in raising global ambition and action to keep the promise of the SDGs.



Headshot

“Sport doesn't just unite people — it breaks down barriers, builds hope, and transforms entire communities. Joining the SDG Advocates is a tremendous honor, and I'm excited to be part of a global movement that empowers youth and drives meaningful change around the world,” shares Ujiri.

The SDG Advocates group is chaired by Prime Minister Mia Mottley of Barbados. Other current members include:

- Her Majesty Queen Mathilde of the Belgians
- Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser of Qatar
- Massimo Bottura, Chef and Co-Founder of Food for Soul
- Diane von Furstenberg, Fashion Designer and Philanthropist
- Monica Geingos, Executive Chairperson of the One Economy Foundation

- Muniba Mazari, Advocate for Disability Rights and Inclusion
- Hindou Ibrahim, Climate and Indigenous Rights Activist
- Graça Machel, Founder and Chair of the Graça Machel Trust
- Dia Mirza, Actor and UNEP Goodwill Ambassador
- Jeffrey Sachs, Director, Center for Sustainable Development, Columbia University
- Lilly Singh, Entertainer and Founder of Unicorn Island Fund
- Brad Smith, President and Vice Chairman of Microsoft
- Hamdi Ulukaya, Founder and CEO of Chobani and Tent Partnership for Refugees

On September 8, *Origin: The Story of the Basketball Africa League*, a new documentary series executive produced by Ujiri, will premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival. The series provides an in-depth look at the transformative power of sports, tracing the creation, launch, and impact of BAL. What began as a longtime dream became reality in 2019, when the NBA committed to establishing a professional league with 12 teams from across Africa. Led by visionaries including Ujiri and Amadou Gallo Fall, the BAL has provided new pathways for African talent while celebrating the continent's cultural and athletic diversity. Featuring interviews with supporters including J. Cole, Stephen Curry, and former U.S. President Barack Obama, the series from co-directors Richard Brown and Tebogo Malope captures the passion of the league's players and advocates, and the unifying power of basketball.

Earlier this month, Ujiri's nonprofit organization Giants of Africa wrapped their second festival in the vibrant city of Kigali, Rwanda. Giants of Africa Festival 2025 drew over 20,000 spectators, and brought together 320 youth athletes from 20 African nations for a weeklong celebration of basketball, music, fashion, and culture. Celebrity guests including Kawhi Leonard, President Paul Kagame, and Robin Roberts (who documented her experience for *Good Morning America*) attended, and chart-topping artists such as Ayra Starr, Uncle Waffles, and Timaya performed. The festival also served as the grand opening of Zaria Court, a state of the art mixed-use sports, entertainment, and cultural district in the heart of Kigali, co-founded by Ujiri.

About Masai Ujiri and Giants of Africa

Masai Ujiri, an award-winning and barrier-breaking NBA executive, is the founder of Giants of Africa. Started in 2003, GOA draws upon Ujiri's unique basketball journey to achieve its goal of uplifting African youth with programs focused on empowerment and leadership. As the first African general manager in North American professional sports who was named NBA Executive of the Year in 2013, Ujiri's ascent to the top of the basketball world began in his native Nigeria and took him around the world as a player, scout and executive, culminating in 2019 when he served as the architect of a Toronto Raptors team that became the first franchise outside the United States to be crowned NBA champions. In 2023, Masai co-founded Zaria Group, an organization that is catalyzing sports, entertainment and cultural infrastructure in Africa through the development, management and commercialization of large multi-purpose venues (including arenas and stadiums) and their surrounding ecosystems. These projects are intended to accelerate Africa's growth in the sports and entertainment industry, creating jobs and fostering new businesses. Ultimately, however, Ujiri believes his work with Giants of Africa will prove to be

the most meaningful and rewarding of his life.

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