

## **The World has the Shape of Football**

Past and present history often reminds us of rapprochement among states, regardless of differences in cultures, civilizations and orientations, so that competitions arenas bring together hearts, souls and minds under the umbrella of championship.

Old history also reminds us of the European competitions and how the torch bearer used to tour the world to applause him, despite time, place, language, color, religion, age, social and cultural backgrounds.

It also reminds us that under the circumstances of the Cold War that dominated the US-China relations, a US ping-pong team traveled to China. The participation of the American team had broken the ice between the two countries, making the two enemies meet around television sets.

The event paved the way for amicable phone conversations by the American and Chinese presidents, thus ending a long time of rupture of relations and apprehension.

The event, which we witnessed a few weeks ago in Egypt, the mother of the world, the African Nations Football Cup, revitalized the capabilities of people that astonished us before it astonished others.

It was really magnificent that feelings were kept intact, despite tension and the desire for winning. This was accompanied by hospitality, respecting guests and welcoming them at any time and under all circumstances. We are rediscovering this merit in ourselves, after we believed that we lost it.

This current event, the 13<sup>th</sup> Luxor International Annual Festival marathon include thousands of different nationalities and age groups. Some of them come specifically for this event. All of them compete for winning the 24 km marathon.

Some of us may be astonished to know that German Ambassador to Egypt Martin Koebler participates in this marathon without any bodyguards, competing everybody to get an advancing order, while the Egyptians stand at both sides of the road to give him a bottle of water to drink and pour the rest on his body in a simple astonishing way.

The importance of this sports event and spontaneity of the German ambassador lies in removing barriers between people and encouraging each other without any barrier of any kind.

Among the significant ideas invented by this extraordinary ambassador and was implemented for the first time was a young sportsmen meeting for German youth coming to Egypt to compete with Egyptian counterpart footballers.

This continues for four months during which they meet youth at villages, helmets, youth centers at working-class districts, etc. In fact, this competition unifies peoples; both winner and loser become friends. After a short round of sweat and struggle, barriers are removed, hearts become open to accept the other regardless of his/her background.