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Mr Sepp Blatter, President
Fédération Internationale de Football
Association
FIFA-Strasse 20
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7 June 2010

RE: Labour Rights in the Production of Footballs

Dear Mr Blatter

The Play Fair Alliance, which consists of the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC), the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF) and the Building Workers' International, would like to draw your attention to the report "Missed the Goal for Workers: the Reality of Soccer Ball Stitchers", which was released today by the US based NGO International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF).

The report reveals that workers stitching soccer balls in Pakistan, India, China and Thailand continue to experience alarming labour rights violations. The research found that child labour still exists in the Pakistani industry and is also occurring in India and China. Other problems highlighted in the report are gender discrimination against female home-based workers, who are paid the least and face constant threat of losing their jobs due to pregnancy; overlong working hours as in one Chinese factory, where workers were found to work as many as 21 hours a day without a day off for an entire month; and lack of proper drinking water or medical care facilities, and even toilets, as found in Indian stitching centers.

In the 13 years since the soccer ball industry signed the "Atlanta Agreement" committing to clean up the industry, regular reports of violations of human rights in soccer ball production have been brought to the attention of key actors in the industry including global brands and FIFA. The Play Fair Alliance in 2008 published research on China, India and Thailand where workers reported wages below the legal minimum despite working 12-13

hours a day. Home-based workers in India reported piece rates as low as US\$0.35 per ball, completing two to four balls a day.

The Play Fair Alliance is deeply concerned that after all these years, low wages and other labour rights violations are still the norm and not the exception in the industry, and we would like to take this opportunity to point out the need to keep in mind the high public expectations that the soccer-ball industry must finally live up to its promises. FIFA, as the peak body for Association Football, and as an organisation active in licensing and quality control of footballs, has both the authority and obligation to set the highest standards in respect of the application of internationally-recognised labour standards in the production of footballs and licensed merchandise.

The Play Fair Alliance calls on FIFA to take immediate action to address the issues of extremely low wages, proliferation of temporary and precarious employment arrangements, and a lack of respect for the rights to Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining. The levels of exploitation in the industry are having appalling effects on those who produce the balls and other equipment upon which the game depends.

The ITUC (through its predecessor organisation the ICFTU) and the ITGLWF have engaged in direct dialogue with FIFA in the past over these issues, and would be happy to further discuss concrete measures with FIFA to improve conditions and clean up the industry, including through the FIFA licensing and “Quality Concept” programmes.

We understand that the Global Union Federation for the Construction Industry, the BWI, has also been in contact with FIFA about the rights and conditions of workers working on the venues for major tournaments, and we wish to indicate to you that we fully support their requests to FIFA.

On behalf of the Play Fair Alliance,

Yours sincerely,

General Secretary

cc:

ITGLWF
BWI
Clean Clothes Campaign