

PRESS RELEASE

FIFA ELECTIONS: ADDRESSING CORRUPTION ALSO MEANS ENDING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ABUSES

Geneva, 29 May 2015 - Responding to the result of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) presidential elections today, in which Sepp Blatter has won a fifth term in office, Terre des Hommes Secretary General, Ignacio Packer said:

"In order to 'root out any wrongdoing in football', Sepp Blatter needs to address the corruption as well as the human rights abuses tainting the values of the game. The message to the new FIFA President is clear: structural reforms are urged. And this means ensuring that any revised criteria for bidding for the World Cup must have transparency and human rights at the heart of all stages of the process, from initial bidding to delivery to evaluation and final reporting. In particular, these should look at children's rights impacted by Mega Sporting Events such as the World Cup".

Children around the world watch and play football. Many idolize the players and dream of being players themselves. The recent news of the corruption charges sends a strong message to children about fairness and about how the world does and should work. As raised by the FBI Director Comey, "the field so famously flat was made tilted in favor of those looking to gain in the expense of kids enjoying a game of soccer."¹ \$ 150 million in a legacy programme spending in host countries could have considerably changed the life of thousands of children. And this is only the tip of the iceberg.

But FIFA's impact goes well beyond feelings and perceptions. Evidence from recent World Cups points to the harm it does to children, be it at individual, family or societal levels. These include: child labour; displacement of children resulting from infrastructure development and street clearance; child sexual exploitation; excessive use of force by the police and human trafficking affecting children.²

Transparency Germany's Sylvia Schenk said on behalf of the Sport and Rights Alliance (SRA), a recently formed coalition of leading rights organisations including Terre des Hommes:

"These elections are a key opportunity for FIFA to turn over a new leaf in regard to human rights and corruption. FIFA has long been dogged by corruption scandals and other controversies, including migrant worker abuse linked to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. While the arrests of top FIFA officials in Zurich this week might force the organisation into finally dealing properly and effectively with endemic corruption, it has yet to demonstrate any real commitment to ensuring mega events such as Qatar 2022 are not built on a foundation of exploitation and abuse."

This crisis will have only led to a 'positive change', if the newly elected FIFA President implements a transparent bidding process that addresses human rights, in particular children's rights abuses - before, during and after the World Cup.

¹ <http://www.c-span.org/video/?326271-1/attorney-general-loretta-lynch-fifa-indictments>

² For more information, see: Brunel University, "Child Exploitation and the World Cup" (2013).



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Terre des Hommes launched the *Children Win* campaign in February 2014 to ensure that leading sports bodies mitigate risks and enhance opportunities of Mega Sporting Events on children, both direct and indirect. Terre des Hommes has commissioned and collected – articles and videos – featuring views and opinions of children linked to Mega Sporting Events: FIFA World Cup™ 2010 in South Africa and FIFA World Cup™ 2014 and Olympic Rio 2016 in Brazil. We encourage leaders of the sport bodies, industry, business, media, and the broad public to meet these children on www.childrenwin.org.