

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE TUESDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2015

AGENDA 2020: HUMAN RIGHTS, LABOUR STANDARDS AND ANTI-CORRUPTION MEASURES MUST BE CENTRAL TO OLYMPIC GAMES BIDS

Human rights, labour standards and anti-corruption measures must be central to all stages of the Olympic Games to stop the event becoming a byword for oppression, the Sport and Rights Alliance (SRA) said today ahead of a key meeting of the International Olympic Committee this week.

The IOC Executive Committee will meet in Rio from 26-28 February to discuss implementation of Agenda 2020, its “strategic roadmap for the future of the Olympic Movement”, passed in December last year. The Agenda includes anti-discrimination measures, labour standards and proposals to improve transparency and promote good governance.

In a letter to IOC president Thomas Bach, the SRA said:

“Too often major sports events have seen people forcibly evicted from their homes to make way for infrastructure, workers exploited, campaigners locked up, the environment damaged beyond repair and notoriously opaque bidding processes.”

“The recommendations in the IOC’s Agenda 2020 are a chance to change that and ensure human rights, the environment and anti-corruption measures are central to all stages of the Olympic Games - from bidding, through to the development and delivery phase to final reporting.”

The letter comes as the IOC prepares for the close of bid registration for the 2024 Olympic Games in September and ahead of the inaugural European Games in June in Baku, Azerbaijan - a country with at least 20 prisoners of conscience where criticizing the government can land you in jail on trumped up charges.

It follows global condemnation of Russia’s appalling record on gay rights, environmental protection and freedom of expression exposed during the Sochi Winter Olympics last year and forced evictions in Brazil ahead of the 2016 Rio Olympics, as well as recent allegations of corruption in international and national sports federations. This is not to mention controversies over other sports events, such as the global outcry over abuse of rights of migrant workers building infrastructure for the Qatar 2022 World Cup and police violence during anti-World Cup protests in Brazil last year.

To ensure that the 2024 Olympics and all Olympic events that follow can be “celebrated not just for their sporting glory but for truly upholding the principles of Olympism” the SRA recommends the IOC includes in the bidding criteria, and in the Host City Contract for 2024, labour and human rights standards on freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, protection from discrimination in employment and eliminating forced labour and child labour.

It suggests the IOC adopts “robust due diligence procedures to ensure that the Games do not cause or contribute to human rights abuses in the hosting or staging of an Olympic event”. Measures to ensure IOC complies with the highest standards of anti-corruption and business integrity are also essential.

All these standards should not be based on goodwill, but must be non-negotiable and absolutely binding for all stakeholders, the letter explains. In addition, the IOC must develop from the very beginning an independent monitoring mechanism to make sure promises made in the bidding phase and fixed in the Host City Contract are adhered to over the lifetime of the event.

Ignacio Packer, Secretary General of Terre des Hommes (IF), a member of the SRA said:

“With its Agenda 2020, the IOC can set an important example for other major sporting bodies to follow. As a child right organization, Terre des Hommes with its Children Win campaign (www.childrenwin.org) calls for opportunities and the risks for children before, during and after Mega Sporting Events to be addressed in the bidding process. Believing change is possible, Terre des Hommes as the other members of the Sport and Rights Coalition can offer expertise to support IOC for its future Games to embrace sporting glory and the true spirit of Olympism”.

The SRA is a coalition of leading NGOs, sports groups and trades unions, including: Amnesty International, FIFPro – World Players’ Union, Football Supporters Europe, Human Rights Watch, the International Trade Union Confederation, Supporters Direct Europe, **Terre des Hommes** and Transparency International Germany.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

Dr. Marianne Meier

Head of Project ‘Children Win’

marianne.meier(at)terredeshommes.org

+41 78 664 77 57

www.terredeshommes.org

www.childrenwin.org

The “Children Win” Campaign sets out the changes we all need for Mega Sporting Events to be safe and fair for children. The campaign doesn’t speak for children — it amplifies their voices. We encourage leaders of the sport industry, business, media, and the broad public to meet the children we spoke to along the way on www.childrenwin.org. Let them tell you how Mega Sporting Events affected their lives.