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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

## ITUC Online

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### Olympics: IOC Inaction on Labour Rights Shameful

International mobilization in 35 countries calls for positive action to clean up Olympic supply chains

4 August 2008, Hong Kong (ITUC OnLine): Campaigners in Hong Kong, backed by the Play Fair 2008 global coalition, have today confronted the International Olympic Committee for its failure to act on widespread exploitation of workers in the manufacture of Olympics-branded products.

Convening today in front of the cultural center on the Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade at 10.00 am for a day's worth of activities, including a photo moment and a speakers' corner, protesters will show the IOC that their lack of commitment to basic worker rights is unacceptable.

"Five years have passed since we first called on the IOC to stand up for the workers who make Olympics products, but it is still business as usual for them. Once again, money is pouring in to the coffers of the Olympics movement, but the workers who create the wealth are still being ripped off," said Guy Ryder, general secretary of the 168-million member International Trade Union Confederation, a Play Fair partner organization.

A clear "road map" of concrete steps that the IOC needs to take to live up to its responsibility to prevent labour rights violations in Olympic supply chains has widespread support, yet the IOC has refused to take action.

According to Play Fair 2008 activists, in the streets of Hong Kong today to raise awareness of the IOC's continued stonewalling on the issue of workers' rights, the IOC has refused to commit staff or resources to constructively follow up on the many outstanding issues - including poverty wages, child labour and excessive overtime - shown to exist in Olympic supply chains.

"Instead of acting properly on the reports by Play Fair, which gave clear evidence of the labour violations, the IOC simply passed the buck to the Beijing organizers, leaving the root problems unsolved," said Esther de Haan, from the Clean Clothes Campaign.

"The IOC is out of sync with the spirit of the Olympic movement; around the world many organizations and individuals have spoken out on dozens of occasions during the past year about the importance of having the IOC deal with these issues. The IOC should be a leader, not a laggard," said Laiha Cheung, general secretary of the Hong Kong Clothing Industry, Clerical & Retail Trade Employees General Union.

Play Fair's research into factories in China producing Olympics merchandise revealed numerous violations of international labor standards and Chinese law. Excessive overtime, poverty wages and poor working conditions remain common in the Olympic products and sportswear factories. The IOC never

followed up properly on the 2007 report and has not taken any action to make sure that Olympic-branded products would not be made with sweatshop labour. For a full list of the organizations calling upon the IOC to take action, see playfair2008.org  
<[http://www.playfair2008.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=64&Itemid=42](http://www.playfair2008.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=64&Itemid=42)> .

While the IOC has failed to act, companies in the sector are showing signs of recognizing the extent of the problem and the failure of traditional corporate social responsibility. At a meeting in Hong Kong, at the beginning of July, Play Fair organizations and sportswear companies agreed to form a working group to address some of the root causes of bad labour conditions in the sector. Also, some national Olympic Committees are willing to work on the issue. The IOC is very clearly lagging behind and has taken no steps to address the labour conditions in their supply chain. See "Leading sports brands, unions, NGOs form working group."  
<[http://www.playfair2008.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=122&Itemid=43](http://www.playfair2008.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=122&Itemid=43)>

"The IOC needs to set the pace, not be a perpetual laggard, leaving workers open to exploitation and abuse when they are making Olympics products," said Neil Kearney, general secretary of the International Textile, Leather and Garment Workers' Federation. "The opportunity to make real change around the Beijing Games has gone; we will continue our campaign until the day that the IOC faces up to its responsibilities."

## PHOTOS

High resolution photos of today's action are downloadable from:  
<http://www.playfair2008.org/photos/>

## MOVING IMAGES

From the Thai Labour Campaign & CCC (Workers' Olympics 2004  
<[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nclg\\_znobM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nclg_znobM)> )

Catch the flame video: here <<http://www.youtube.com/user/catchtheflame>> & here <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfiCruwaGEI>>

Fila be fair to workers at Tae Hwa, Indonesia  
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vq2Du5KAzzE&feature=related>>

Nike and their dealings with sweatshops  
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgl7vDZ-jF8&feature=related>>

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Play Fair's road map  
<[http://www.playfair2008.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=123&Itemid=43](http://www.playfair2008.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=123&Itemid=43)> for the IOC
- Play Fair 2008 research report  
<[http://www.playfair2008.org/docs/playfair\\_2008-report.pdf](http://www.playfair2008.org/docs/playfair_2008-report.pdf)> on working

conditions in factories producing Olympic logo goods

An update on the four Chinese factories profiled

<[http://www.playfair2008.org/docs/Prodction\\_of\\_Olympics\\_sponsored\\_goods.pdf](http://www.playfair2008.org/docs/Prodction_of_Olympics_sponsored_goods.pdf)>

- For additional info, see [www.playfair2008.org](http://www.playfair2008.org) and [www.catchtheflame.org](http://www.catchtheflame.org)

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The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 311 national affiliates. Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org>

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