

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

ITUC OnLine

070/310311

A Sporting Chance for Workers: Launch of the Play Fair Campaign in Brazil

Brussels, 31 March 2011 (ITUC OnLine): An international conference organised by Play Fair and the Building Workers' International is opening today in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The Conference will launch the BWI Campaign around the World Cup 2014, as well as the Olympic Games 2016 Play Fair Campaign, and will formalise the strategies and action plans around both campaigns.

For the first time in history, the world's two biggest sports events are being held in the same country, within two years of each other. While countries and cities all around the world are rightly proud of hosting these big sports events, the workers (mainly located in Asia), who are making the merchandise for the events, such as T-shirts, bags, shoes, stationery and other items, are too often victims of abuses and work in indecent conditions. "Is it fair to go a mega sports event and pay a high price for a t-shirt that has been made by an underpaid worker in a sweatshop on the other side of the world?" asks Play Fair.

The campaigners want FIFA and the International Olympic Committee, together with the local organising committees, to accept their responsibility to make sure all production and construction around the events is done under decent working conditions.

"It is totally unacceptable that the workers involved in those massive sports events are still exploited. The workers should gain from these games too – not suffer from them," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow. "With this campaign, we aim to make sure that sports events are fair for workers involved in the making of sporting goods and the building of venues," she added.

"It is paramount that the principles of the decent work agenda are applied during the works for the World Cup and Summer Olympics in Brazil," said ITUC Deputy President Nair Goulart. "The construction works are already under way – such as the infrastructure projects – and the workers are already demanding better health and safety conditions as well as decent wages. This campaign is important to raise awareness in regards to the respect of the decent work agenda. Moreover, we should make sure a collective agreement can be reached at the national level in respect to the minimum standards of the ILO," she added.

Representatives from the British Trade Union Congress will also take part in the Brazil conference, to brief the local trade unions on their work in the Play Fair campaign around the London 2012 Olympics.

"The TUC and the organisers of the London Olympics and Paralympics share the ambition to make London 2012 sweatshop-free. We have worked together, for instance, on a complaints mechanism covering supply chains. It is hard to establish world class labour standards in a world where exploitation is rife, but we hope that London 2012 represents a big step forward and that our Brazilian colleagues benefit from and build on our experience," said TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber.

“It’s especially important for us that all work in constructions for the World Cup, no matter being it a stadium, road or a trainstation, must be constructed under safe working conditions”, said Ambet Yuson, the General Secretary for the Building and Wood Workers International. “It is equally important that all stadia are free from asbestos.”

For more information from the BWI: <http://www.bwint.org>

“Workers who produce the clothing, shoes and merchandise for the world’s major sporting events deserve decent jobs with a living wage, and full respect for their rights at work,” said Patrick Itschert, ITGLWF General Secretary.

For more information from the ITGLWF: <http://www.itglwf.org>

Manifesto to be adopted: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/manifesto-for-the-play-fair.html>

(*) Play Fair is a global campaign that involves different international trade union federations and NGOs, such as the ITUC, the Global Union Federation for the Textiles, Leather and Garment industry (ITGLWF), the Building and Wood Workers’ International (BWI), and the Clean Clothes Campaign, which is an international alliance of NGOs and trade unions working to improve workers’ rights and working conditions in the industry. Labour rights groups and trade unions from many countries in the developing and transition countries, including from Hong Kong, are supporting and participating in the campaign.

Contact:

Alex Praça

alexandre.praga@csa-csi.org

tel. +55 11 2104 0771

fax +55 11 2104 0751

Mathieu Debroux

ITUC Press Officer

+32 476 62 10 18

Mathieu.debroux@ituc-csi.org

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 305 affiliated national organisations from 151 countries and territories. Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org> and <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

For more information, please contact the ITUC Press Department on: +32 2 224 0204 or +32 476 621 018

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