

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

New “FIFA” Laws Strip World Cup Workers’ Rights in Russia

Brussels, 9 October 2013 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC is backing its Russian affiliates, FNPR and KTR, in opposing exemptions from Russian labour law for the 2018 World Cup, which would deprive tens of thousands of Russian and migrant workers of basic legal protections covering working hours, overtime and its remuneration, weekend and night work and a range of other standards. The law, which was adopted by the Russian Duma this summer, would apply until the end of 2018 and effectively allow FIFA and its partners, including Russian and multinational companies, to set working conditions outside the framework of Russian law.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said, “The World Cup is becoming notorious for exploitation of workers, in Qatar, in Brazil and now with this unprecedented new law in Russia. The Russian case contradicts FIFA President Sepp Blatter’s assertion last week that ‘FIFA cannot interfere with the labour rights of any country’. Governments should stand up to the commercial interests which make huge gains out of the World Cup at great cost to local workers and the community. FIFA itself needs to take responsibility to ensure that the people who deliver the facilities and services are protected, not exploited.”

With several construction workers having already lost their lives building new stadiums in St Petersburg and Kazan, Russian unions are concerned that removing worker protections will lead to more exploitation, deaths and injuries. In 2012, in result of the Tatarstan prosecutor-organised audit, half of 50 subcontractors at the Kazan site were penalised for failing to provide proper health and safety equipment and training. According to media, three workers died building the St Petersburg stadium and several more were injured, while two fatalities have been recorded by the labour inspection in Kazan.

In Brazil, President Dilma Rouseff has intervened to veto a provision in the 2014 “World Cup Law” which would have exempted legal provisions on payment of wages to “volunteers”. “Fair play for only the 90 minutes of a football match is not enough. FIFA and its local World Cup Organising Committees should ensure fair play for the very people who deliver this iconic sporting event,” said Burrow.

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 156 countries and territories and has 315 national affiliates.

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