

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

FIFA Candidate's Independent Reform Pledge a Positive Step

Brussels, 22 February 2015 (ITUC OnLine): A pledge by one of the candidates for election as FIFA President on 26 February has been welcomed as a positive step by the ITUC. Jordan's Prince Ali has committed to setting up an independent FIFA oversight commission, headed by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, if elected.

ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow said, "At last one of the candidates has recognised what the rest of the world has known for a long time – independent reform is crucial to establishing credibility and public trust in FIFA. Nevertheless, Prince Ali's planned commission does not seem to include the necessary action on human rights and labour standards in the choosing and delivery of major FIFA events like the World Cup. FIFA has failed to use its influence to place pressure on Qatar to reform its labour laws as hundreds of thousands of migrant workers face continued exploitation and appalling health and safety conditions delivering the huge 2022 World Cup infrastructure programme. That issue too is central to FIFA's credibility."

Ali has been the most prominent of the candidates in support of human rights and labour standards, while France's Jerome Champagne has pledged to respect collective bargaining rights for players. Some national football federations have already said they will not vote for one of the candidates, Sheik Salman of Bahrain, over allegations, which he denies, of involvement in repression of sports players in the 2011 violent crackdown by the authorities on the pro-democracy movement in that country. "FIFA has yet to conduct any meaningful investigation into these allegations, and his limited responses during his public campaign for the FIFA presidency have done little to dispel those concerns," said Burrow.

FIFA has so far refused to accept the call for independent and external reform in the wake of corruption scandals and on the human rights and labour standards issues, and its plans to elect a new President on 26 February are proceeding.

"The outcome of the FIFA elections on 26 February will be crucial in determining whether FIFA will undertake the necessary reforms, or whether the stain of human and labour rights violations will remain," said Burrow.

The ITUC represents 180 million workers in 162 countries and territories and has 333 national affiliates.

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