

April 24, 2006

To,
Mr. José Manuel Barroso
President of the European Commission
1049 Brussels
Belgium

**Re: Concerns about Child Labour and Child Trafficking during
World Cup 2006**

Dear Mr. Barroso,

Greetings from Global March!

Once every 4 years, the world eagerly looks forward to their soccer game with enthusiasm and excitement that can only stem from deep passion for this international game. Amidst this exuberance is a hidden darker side that is refused to be not only acknowledged but is met with blatant denial and ignorance.

Hundreds of thousands of children are slaving to make this World Cup a success. Child labour has now crossed beyond the limits of football stitching. How? Millions of children are losing their precious childhood in exchange for producing sporting goods like sports equipments, sports wear, shoes, caps and lots of other accessories. They are spending 12-14 hours a day toiling in absolutely merciless conditions deprived of minimum wages. This is a barefaced violation of not only national labour laws and international conventions but is an unconcealed violation of basic human rights.

In addition, coming to the forefront is another irrefutable fact that thousands of innocent victims, mostly girls are trafficked for sex work, in anticipation of the expected one million foreign visitors for the FIFA 2006. There is little doubt that women and children are being exploited and abused. It is heart wrenching to note that an event as important as the World Cup, instead of promoting an environment of wellness is the cause for desolation and despair.

Trafficking for sexual exploitation has burgeoned in recent years and child trafficking is emerging as a global issue. According to a report by the ILO in 2004, nearly 8.4 million children are being forced into slavery, trafficking and prostitution. As a result of weak protective mechanisms innocent children are being lured by unscrupulous agents to meet the demands of the growing commercial sex-sector who then impose on them illegal work conditions.

There have been Government interventions like the Palermo Protocol, which made trafficking in persons an international criminal offence and the UN

Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Then, there was the ILO Migration for Employment Convention (No. 97), the ILO convention (No. 29) referencing forced labour and the ILO Convention on the Worst of Forms of Child Labour (182) adopted in 1999 that identifies trafficking of children as a practice similar to slavery. Little to nothing has been done either to monitor or to follow up with action plans where trafficking of children is concerned.

According to the UN Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking, protecting victims' rights should take precedence over combating organized crime. Many governments have realized that this modern form of slavery not only violates universal principles of human rights, but also has grave security consequences due to the involvement of criminal networks.

We also appreciate that the German Legislature has revised its existing laws on human trafficking and illegal employment, paving the way for more proactive measures against trafficking, and have devised a Sexual Trafficking of Persons (STOP) Programme as recent as 2002, Much is still left unattended to. Time-bound measures, plans and activities, and broadened collaboration at bilateral, regional and international levels are very necessary to combat the trafficking taking place between countries and across borders.

Apart from the severe physical agony the children also suffer irreversible mental trauma as a direct result from separation from loved ones, threats against loved ones for noncompliance, physical abuse, psychological humiliation, being confined to a locked space, being transported without knowledge of destination and witnessing sexual activity. Such trauma makes them prone to depression, many times paving a way for drug addiction and at times suicidal tendencies.

Also, FIFA has not been far behind by initiating supporting initiatives to make the football industry in Pakistan and India free of child labour. Nevertheless we are also strongly convinced that much more can and should be done by FIFA and by the sporting goods companies it is working with, to make the football industry child labour free, to rehabilitate and educate the children, and to make sure that adults are producing sporting goods under decent working conditions.

Therefore, much remains to be understood about child labour problems surrounding the World Cup and much remains to be done towards realizing solutions that ensures both the protection of victims as well as penalizing the offenders. We are hence, bound by a moral duty to expose the horrifying implications of doing nothing and to do everything in our capacity to stop and pressurize authorities to put an end to trafficking.

The fact that the EU is the largest donor of aid for development around the world and that EU regional aid has raised living standards in the poor regions in Europe

acts as a catalyst to ensure quick action. We urge the European Union to provide the public with clear and certified information about the implementation of their contractual obligations on children in servitude, which includes trafficking. It's not just the law enforcement agencies but also the general public and most importantly the fans attending the World Cup who should be alerted to this grave issue. The European Parliament passed a resolution prohibiting the use of abusive and exploitative child labour in all supply chains in the sporting goods industry.

On behalf of the Global March Against Child Labour, a worldwide movement working to free children from servitude and ensure quality education for all, we urge Germany and the European Union countries to ratify and implement the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Palermo Protocol. We urge FIFA to ensure that no children are employed in the football industry and other FIFA-licensed goods production and that the labour rights in the contract between FIFA and sporting goods companies are fully implemented before the start of the 2006 FIFA World Cup. We push for sporting goods companies to fully implement their contractual agreement with FIFA on child labour and labour rights.

We would also highly recommend that the European Commission exert pressure on European governments to tighten border controls and step up efforts to identify women and children being moved illegally through EU countries to Germany during this summer's football World Cup.

As a follow up with its World Cup 2002 campaign Global March seeks to ensure that this year promises made are kept and that the World Cup 2006 will be a child labour free and child trafficking free event. We look forward to your cooperation in this endeavour.

It is urgent to act: Millions of children, their lives and future depend on our individual and collective resolve.

In solidarity,



Kailash Satyarthi
Chairperson