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Statement by Mr. Wilfried Lemke, Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace

“In my capacity as Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace I firmly believe in, and endeavor to advance, the values and power of sport to promote conflict resolution and peace building. Sport is an influential tool for uniting people, and developing tolerance, respect and social inclusion. It is a universal language which, if fairly played by the rules of the game, has the ability to transcend boundaries and offers a friendly and safe environment for peaceful social interaction.

For the fundamental values of sport to truly be realized, sport must be played in accordance with the universally agreed rules and regulations which are overseen by relevant governing bodies. In order to preserve sport’s integrity and values, these international standards and rules must be adhered to by all sporting organizations, clubs and leagues around the world, regardless of their size.

In light of the ongoing dispute between the IFA, PFA and FIFA on Israeli football clubs operating on the occupied Palestinian territories, and acknowledging the relevant United Nations Resolutions, I condemn any actions that breach these regulations. The United Nations Security Council has determined that Israeli settlements in occupied territory have no legal validity, as they are in breach of international law, and that such practices are an obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The UN recognizes sport as a fundamental human right and, as such, it advocates and facilitates the realization of such a right by everyone. Without undermining the right of Israeli and Palestinian people to sport, all teams playing in recognized FIFA competitions should abide by the laws of the game. I therefore urge a resolution of any disputes in line with the United Nations Security Council Resolutions and FIFA Statutes within a reasonable timeframe. I further call for the free movement of athletes, coaches and officials in, between, and around Israel and Palestine, to enable them to freely exercise sport and partake in sporting events.

Sport makes a growing contribution to development and peace and is a powerful tool with the ability to build bridges and significantly contribute to peacebuilding efforts in conflict areas such as the Middle East. Sport can promote understanding and reach across divides and conflicts to reinforce our common humanity and build the conditions for a better and peaceful world. It should therefore be used as such and I encourage approaches to use sport from this perspective and remain hopeful for an amicable resolution to the dispute satisfying all parties involved.”



ANNEX

United Nations Resolutions

[A/RES/70/89](#) : Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan

[S/RES/446](#) : Determines that the policy and practices of Israel in establishing settlements in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 have no legal validity

[A/HRC/25/L.38](#) : Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan

[A/HRC/31/L.38](#) : Ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

[S/RES/242](#) : Security Council resolution 242 (1967)

[A/RES/67/19](#) : Status of Palestine in the United Nations

[A/HRC/31/L.36](#) : Right of the Palestinian people to self-determination

FIFA Statutes

[FIFA Statute, April 2016 edition](#): Regulations Governing the Application of the Statutes Standing Orders of the Congress. [Article 72 (2)]

