

The Beijing Olympics

Play Fair 2008 Campaign Statement

This campaign statement is intended to guide the actions of those organisations, which have pledged themselves to take part in a global campaign to draw attention to working conditions in the world sportswear sector as we approach the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008. In 2004, one of the biggest ever global mobilisations against inhuman working conditions was launched in advance of the Athens Olympics.

Known as the “Play Fair at the Olympics Campaign”, it consisted of an alliance of Oxfams¹, Global Unions (including the then ICFTU² and the ITGLWF), the Clean Clothes Campaign and their constituent organisations worldwide. It aimed to push sportswear and athletic footwear companies, the International Olympics Committee (IOC) and its national organising committees (NOCs), as well as national governments, into taking identifiable and concrete measures to eliminate the exploitation and abuse of those mostly women workers in the global sporting goods industry.

The Playfair Alliance recognizes that an end to the present system of exploitation and abuse in the sportswear and athletic footwear industries can only really be brought about when governments assume their responsibilities both nationally and internationally to protect workers rights and to hold business accountable for labour practices, and when workers are able to organize in order to advance their own interests.

Nevertheless, we believe that sporting bodies such as the International Olympic Committee, through their licensing arrangements, and the totality of those companies which market or produce sportswear, athletic footwear and other sporting goods can take far greater responsibility for the labour practices in this industry than they do now.³

What did we achieve in Athens?

The brands

Our campaign in 2004 powerfully conveyed, particularly to some of the lesser known *sportswear brands*, that they could no longer ignore the issue of workers’ rights, or their collective responsibility, along with their suppliers, for labour abuses involving workers having their rights violated and being forced to put in long hours of forced overtime for poverty wages.

- Although we have so far not been able to get the industry as a whole to commit to the Programme of Work⁴ which was drawn up in advance of the Athens Games, a number of sportswear brands – *Asics, Mizuno, Puma, and Umbro* did respond positively and

¹ 11 Oxfams participated in the 2004 Athens campaign. Oxfam is not participating in the Play Fair 2008 campaign, but remains a member of the Play Fair Alliance.

² Now known as the ITUC – International Trade Union Confederation

³ We would refer you to the Athens campaign policy statement for a background summary of the position of workers in the sportswear industry: <http://www.fairolympics.org/background.html>

⁴ Programme of Work: http://www.fairolympics.org/background/programme_of_work.pdf

seriously to our campaign demands on corporate social responsibility. Nevertheless some brands in our original list of targets - Fila, Kappa, Lotto - have so far failed to engage with us in any meaningful way.

- In the case of the leading sportswear brands Nike, adidas/Reebok, these companies have taken steps to disclose the locations of their supply chains and now openly acknowledge that their current code compliance initiatives are incapable of delivering their stated objective of averting labour abuses in any sustainable way. Whilst they readily acknowledge that supplier respect for the principle of freedom of association is central to achieving compliance with all labour standards, they continue to deal reactively rather than proactively with this issue.
- Although the campaign was essentially targeted at sportswear multinationals, it has become a point of reference for industrial relations in other parts of the global apparel industry.
- Despite this many sporting goods companies, continue to 'free ride' on the back of existing company and multi-stakeholder initiatives to address worker rights in supply chains and need to be brought up to industry wide best practice.
- In all cases the central problem of the impact of purchasing practices on working conditions – absence of a living wage and excessive working hours - still remains to be addressed by individual companies and by the sporting goods industry at large.

The IOC

Playfair 2008 acknowledges that the IOC has responsibilities, and the potential to make a positive difference, with respect to workers' rights issues in a range of sectors which contribute to the success of the Olympics Games, and supports initiatives to ensure that workers' rights are fully respected in these areas.

In the case of sportswear, although many national Olympics committees and several athletes joined the campaign call for an end to the abuse and exploitation of workers in the sportswear industry, the IOC, on the other hand, categorically refused to take responsibility for workers' rights in the Olympics sponsorship and licensing programmes at global, national and games level, despite acknowledging that the campaign aims are in the spirit of the Olympic ideals of fair play and ethics.

National Governments

A number of national governments in major buying and supplying countries in the global sporting goods market have failed so far to ratify and implement some of the core conventions of the International Labour Organisation. Consequently there are sporting goods firms which operate an ethical code of conduct based on the ILO core conventions, yet are headquartered in countries which have yet to ratify these norms and source considerable volumes of product from countries which fail in their international duty.

So as we gear up for the Beijing Olympics, Global Unions, CCC and international partners have now started the "Play Fair 2008" campaign. Whilst we hope that the Beijing Games will

be a success, we also hope that the Chinese Government will draw inspiration from the spirit of the Olympics and demonstrate to the rest of the world how the principles of 'fair play' can be extended to the workplace.

Accordingly, Play Fair 2008 wishes to take this opportunity to make visible 'the other side' of the Olympics - namely the day to day working life of those workers – mainly women -in the global sportswear sector and Olympic related industries and press upon all those parties involved some key demands as we approach the Games

Our campaign demands

We call upon the International Olympics Committee to:

- Make it a condition for future Olympic games events that the host country must have ratified, implemented and respected the core ILO conventions
- Require that, as a contractual condition in its licensing, sponsorship and marketing agreements, labour practices and working conditions involved in the production of IOC branded products comply with internationally recognized labour standards
- Commit resources to undertake proactive investigations of working conditions and to establish mechanisms for ending abusive and exploitative labour practices in IOC and NOC supply chains, including substantiated complaints.
- Commit to promoting publicly the necessity to end the exploitation and abuse involved in the sportswear and athletic footwear industries.
- Ensure that respect for workers rights is an integral part of the Olympic Charter and of the IOC Code of Ethics.
- Support efforts to ensure respect for workers' rights in other aspects Games related employment, .

We call upon National Olympics Committees to:

- Work through the IOC to put in place mechanism for ending abusive and exploitative practices as described above.
- Use their influence on companies operating in their country and national team sponsors to push for the campaign demands.
- Require that the NOC publicly discloses companies with which it has licensing, sponsorship and marketing agreements.
- Require that, as a contractual condition in its licensing, sponsorship and marketing agreements with companies, that they publicly disclose their production locations and ensure that labour practices and working conditions involved in the production of NOC branded products comply with internationally recognized labour standards

We call upon sportswear brands, and other companies seeking financial gains from the Games, to:

- Adopt sourcing policies that require suppliers and their sub-contractors to respect internationally recognized labour standards ⁵
- Address, as an integral part of their sourcing policy, the negative impacts that their purchasing practices can have on labour practices and working conditions in their respective supply chains.
- Raise their own standards and their expectations of other companies in the sector in ending exploitation and abuse, and upholding, as a minimum, national law where not in violation of relevant internationally recognised labour standards.
- Take immediate and *positive* steps to ensure specifically that the right of workers to form and join trade unions and to collectively bargain is respected throughout their respective supply-chains.
- Maintain production in unionized⁶ facilities, and when expanding production, give preference to locations where trade union rights are respected in law and practice.
- Undertake concrete steps to address the living wage issue (ensuring suppliers do not hold worker deposits, and pay wages on time)
- Inform the public about the working conditions in which the products that they market are made and be fully transparent with respect to all business operations and arrangements affecting labour practices and working conditions.
- Disclose the identity, location and country details of all their supplier factories.

We call upon suppliers of sportswear, athletic footwear and Olympic logo goods, to:

- Put in place a functioning industrial relations framework⁷ to ensure working conditions that comply with international labour standards and national labour legislation, whichever provides greater protection for the workers concerned.

• ⁵ As contained in the Jo-In code: <http://www.jo-in.org/pub/docs/Jo-In%20Draft%20Common%20Code%205.05.pdf>

• ⁶ as consistent with conventions 87 & 98

• ⁷ as evidenced by a well organised workforces represented by recognised and trained independent trade union representatives engaging in grievance and disputes resolution and periodic but regular collective bargaining with the management of those facilities consistent with the principles laid down in ILO Conventions 87 and 98.

- In every instance ensure that work performed in their respective supply chain is performed under the protections provided by a recognised employment relationship and internationally recognised labour standards⁸
- In case goods are sourced from homeworkers, brands and suppliers should respect the basic rights of home workers as provided in the ILO Convention on Homeworking (C177).

We call upon all Governments to:

- Facilitate the right of workers to form and join independent trade unions and engage in bona fide collective bargaining by the immediate ratification (where they are not ratified) and full application of all relevant ILO Conventions
- Implement policies that promote socially responsible behaviour in international business activity, including the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy and, where relevant, the OECD Guidelines for Multinational enterprises.
- Promote respect for workers' rights in international and bilateral treaties and trade agreements, and through international organisations such as the International Labour Organisation as well as other relevant UN bodies and intergovernmental organisations.
- Promote a role for the ILO in making codes of labour practice more effective.
- Adopt a procurement policies that guarantee respect for worker's rights

We call upon the Chinese Government in addition to:

- Live up to the 'promise'⁹ made on securing the Olympics to improve human rights
- Maximise the benefits of the Olympics for the Chinese people
- Ratify and fully implement ILO conventions 87 and 98
- End labour rights abuses such as discrimination against or harassment, dismissal or detention of labour activists

▪ ⁸ for a definition of the recognized international labour standards Cf. JOIN Code <http://www.jo-in.org/pub/docs/Jo-In%20Draft%20Common%20Code%205.05.pdf>. Play Fair 2008 emphasizes that workers performing this work, either time rated or piece rated, should do so as a part of a regular contract which pays a living wage for a standard working week that does not exceed 48 hours

⁹ May 2001, the Mayor of Beijing, Liu Qi pledged that by hosting the games, "social progress and economic development" in China and Beijing would move forward, as would China's human rights situation,' Agence France Presse (AFP), 14 July 2001.

- Implement and monitor existing and impending labour laws and regulations, including those governing employment contracts, wages and basic protections for workers, ending the culture of impunity for companies breaking labour laws and government officials complicit in this
- Commit to serious and sustained improvement in health and safety at work.
- End the systematic discrimination of domestic migrant workers
- Abolish the Re-education through Labour (RTL) system.
- Release all detained labour activists

We call upon Investors to:

- Communicate to all sportswear companies that the extent to which they have taken concrete and credible steps to end exploitative and abusive labour practices will be among the key criteria applied when making investment decisions.

Play Fair 2008 hereby commits itself to campaign on these demands and calls upon all workers in the sportswear industry to ensure that they remain at the centre of the campaign and engage in a range of solidarity actions in clear support of the enforcement of fundamental workers' rights. We further call upon the general public including all consumers, athletes, sports fans to participate actively in this campaign through the organisation of activities and awareness raising around the demands of the campaign actively join us in making this campaign a success.