

International Conference for the Young African Footballer

YAOUNDE, CAMEROUN

Mr Lemke, Special Adviser to the UN General Secretary on Sport for Development and Peace

Talking Points

Thursday, 28 October 2008.

Mrs. Chantal Biya, First Lady of the Republic of Cameroon,
Mr. Augustin Edjoa. Minister of Sport and Physical Education,
Mr. Jean Claude Mbvoumin, President of Culture Foot Solidaire,
Excellencies,
Dear Friends,

1. Acknowledgment

Thank you Culture Foot Solidaire for organizing this important Conference.

Thank you to the government of Cameroon for recognizing how important it is that we have a conference to discuss the Young African Footballer.

Thank you to the organizations represented here today including the European Union, the FIFA, National Federations and those of the United Nations system: UNICEF, UNDP, ILO.

2. Sport as a tool for development and peace

[Personal experience as former Manager of the SV Werder Bremen]

As the Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace I recognize that sport is a powerful tool for development and peace. Sport provides countless opportunities to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Youth are among the greatest beneficiaries of the positive effects of sport.

The "soft skills" learned through sport, specifically by the young footballers such as respect, cooperation, discipline, leadership, can contribute to improving health and education and also to give youth better chance to find a profession;

Sport also provides a vehicle for achieving **gender equality** and the empowerment of women and girls. Increasing access for women and girls to physical education and sport helps them build confidence and challenges gender stereotypes.

3. Human trafficking in sport

If sport can promote good values, it can also promote poor values. We all know that sport is facing **troubles**. Violence, doping or corruption are among the dark sides of sport. Together we have to fight against those problems to prevent consequences on human health and on the sport image.

Today, we are here to talk about an **emerging problem** particularly evident in the football arena: the chaotic exodus of young African footballers to Europe.

This problem has been defined by some as an “exploitation”. The UNICEF describes the phenomenon as a “human trafficking”.

The (article 3 of) United Nations Palermo Protocol gives the following definition of child trafficking:

“A child victim of trafficking is any person under 18 who is recruited, transported, transferred, harboured or received for the purpose of exploitation [...]”

According to the **UNICEF** who cares for child protection, trafficking in the context of sport involves the sale of child athletes, usually across national boundaries, for commercial profit.

Non-official and non-regulated **football training centres** train young players. They can recruit them but also reject them. Such players may become involved in illegal migration or be transferred from club to club compared to merchandise.

One of the United Nations Office Key objects is to ensure respect is upheld for the principles of human right. In our case, especially youth and child right.

It is in our duty to encourage Governments, Football Federations and clubs to avoid an anarchic exodus of young Africans. Which can lead to homeless children and greater poverty.

Many of these youth are just children when they leave. Their **rights** must be protected.

Ms. Ora Musu Clemens, Representative of UNICEF in Cameroon, is here today with us to support us in our efforts.

Professional players, over 18 years old are not just footballers and leisure seekers. They are employees. They are migrant workers. And they must be assured **decent working conditions**.

A representative of the International Labour Organization (ILO) is here today with us to support us in our efforts.

4. Proposed measures

The high media visibility of football leads young footballers to **dream** of becoming rich and famous. We all need to have dreams. We all need to have passions. And we all need to preserve our dreams and strive to reach them. However, some of the dreams these young people have are unrealistic and unsafe. We have to make these young people aware of the consequences of migrating to Europe.

For African countries, the loss of such talent to Europe means the loss of a youthful and strong work force needed for its economic development. It also means a decrease in the level of African football.

My office welcomes FIFA's social and human development programmes, measures from the European Union and all projects using football as a tool for development and peace. At the Home of FIFA in Zurich, in June 2008, several bodies of the world of football gathered with Foot Solidaire. They discussed three categories of measures to enhance protection of young African footballers:

- Before migration (e.g. awareness campaign)
- Concerning migration (control of migration terms)
- After migration (give support and promote integration in Europe)

e.g. *“When I was the Werder Bremen Manager, I offered German lessons to foreign players and helped some to find a decent job following the end of their career...”*)

Let me draw your attention to two of the proposed actions of Foot Solidaire :

The « **Maison du jeune footballeur** » Project Is aimed to young people, educators, footballing executives and families. It will help, supervise and advise young African footballers in their country of origin. This project also suggests alternatives to football playing such as coaching referring and give the children the opportunity to go to school and get a diploma.

To ensure a good future, the social aspects of youth development have to be put before the sporting ones.

The “Maison du jeune footballeur” is an important way of promoting local development and protecting young African footballers. We strongly support the project « Maison du jeune footballeur » and recommend countries to promote such prevention measures.

Another important step is the **Charter of Solidarity Football**, a project to prevent against children traffic and exploitation in football. We recommend all involved in the world of football and all people worried about a healthy sport development to consider this charter. But one should not forget the huge potential of football and other sports in promoting health, education and social development.

In order to promote decent work on an international scale it is important to act locally.

Players, coaches, volunteers, and involved professionals can have a strong impact on youth They are role models for the youth. They are educators. Local or global high-profile athletes can have a strong influence on youth who admire and often wish to emulate them. Samuel Eto'o is Cameroon's national star, Didier Drogba is a national star of Côte d'Ivoire.

But every region, every village, every kid deserves its own model! In becoming role models, footballers can contribute to development programmes inside their own country or region. Role

models often appeal for resources for sports facilities. They visit schools and communities to communicate important messages about health, drugs, HIV/AIDS, motivation, and life skills.

Coaches have an important educative mission, not only in communicating football skills and their passion for sport but also human values such as loyalty, tolerance...

Conclusion

For the respect of our children, we need to fight against “young footballers’ exploitation”. To achieve our goal, we need to work together. We need to develop a common realization in both European and African Governments that there is something to do. So that the young people of Africa can still dream their dreams, have their role models and serve their countries.