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REMARKS

by

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**Asian conference on Integrity in Sport
'Match Fixing: The ugly side of the beautiful game'**

20 February 2013

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Dato' Alex Soosay
Mr Zhang Jilong
Mr Ralf Mutschke
Delegates
Colleagues
Friends

On behalf of INTERPOL's Secretary General Ronald K. Noble I am very pleased to be here to participate in the launch of INTERPOL's first match fixing conference in Asia.

Bringing together law enforcement agencies, international partners and football associations from more than 40 countries. We are making a strong, united stand.

In this week's newspapers here in Malaysia it was reported that a former national player refused to start a premier league match on Friday for fear of being harmed by match fixing bookies.

This player asked the coach to bench him after being threatened and sat out the majority of the match.

Also just yesterday, the Chinese football association has banned 33 players and officials for life after a three year probe into match-fixing. Twelve clubs have been fined in the past year and more than 50 players, referees and officials have been jailed.

Match fixing - a victimless crime? Not at all.

We are here today because match-fixing is not in fact a victimless crime. It is often directly related to transnational organized crime groups, making it a global problem and a global issue that we are here to collectively address.

As the issue of match-fixing continues to make headlines internationally, criminal charges, players suspended, referees under investigation, it is essential that we all collectively join resources and that we take back the game of football.

Illegal betting generates huge revenues and thus makes it appealing to crime groups. By bringing together partners we are raising awareness and understanding of the problem.

Sports, and fair play, is the very fabric of our society and youth. The impact of match-fixing, murders, suicide, assault, threats, have the ability to undermine that very fabric.

Players such as Italy's Simone Farina who took the most courageous of steps to not only refuse to be involved, but to publicly speak against match fixing, is to be commended.

By partnering with all of you INTERPOL is taking a holistic approach through prevention, education and training to combat match fixing.

INTERPOL also has a strong operational component in fighting match-fixing. With recent successes like operation SOGA – a coordinated operation targeting soccer gambling in Asia which you will hear about in more detail during the conference – resulting in massive amounts of arrests, cash seized and disrupting the work of these criminal organizations.

Match fixing is not however solely a policing problem and that is why you are all here this week.

In closing I would like to thank FIFA for taking such a strong and positive step forward by partnering with INTERPOL. FIFA is clearly leading by example.

I would also like to thank Chief Commissioner Abu Kassim bin Mohamed of the Malaysia Anti-Corruption Commission. INTERPOL has a long standing and proud partnership with MACC and the Malaysia Anti-Corruption Academy and looks forward to continuing our work together in this area.

Finally, to the Asian Football Confederation for your dedicated assistance in helping INTERPOL put this event together.

Look around the room. I encourage you to use the next few days to connect with as many people as possible. Think of everyone in this room as the extra players on the pitch. Collectively we can, and shall, combat match fixing.

And we can, and shall, take back the beautiful game of football.
