

-- Press Release --

Are the global sports organizations hiding behind the FIFA governance challenges?

First Ethics in Sports Symposium Berlin digs deep into the current sports-political issues

Berlin, 25 September 2015 - In a trailblazing intervention at the famous football stadium An der Alten Försterei, the World Forum for Ethics in Business in partnership with the German football club 1. FC Union Berlin convened for the Ethics in Sports Symposium Berlin on 24th September, taking place for the first time in Germany's capital.

International stakeholders from sports, business, politics and media not only discussed on current governance issues in sports but also emphasized on the important values sports promotes and the enormous potential sports has to address social problems.

Quoting WFEB's founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar in her welcome address, the president of the Forum, Rajita Kulkarni, reminded the audience of the influence sports has, 'If every gun in the hand is replaced by a soccer ball at the feet, the world will be a much more healthier, happier and peaceful place.'

'Sports is necessary for the international community to convey messages where politics cannot', added Jo Leinen, Member of European Parliament.

1. FC Union Berlin President Dirk Zingler stated how the strong must support the weak. 'We should be aware of using the integrating power of sports to benefit the society.'

Dr. André Hahn, Member of German Parliament, commended the Köpenick based football club for their dedication and current activities towards supporting the refugees in Berlin.

Participants and speakers mutually agreed that the commercialization in sports threatens to overshadow the values that sports transports. In keynote speeches and panel discussions ways for the protection of the purity and integrity of sports were discussed.

Sylvia Schenk, Chair of the Working Group Sport at Transparency International urged that 'It is not enough to just proclaim values in sports. We need to live them everyday anew.' Schenk also commended that the creation of such open discussion platforms is a step forward and a 'healthy approach'.

The core discussion at the Symposium on the challenges on and off the pitch raised the question whether global sports organizations are actually hiding behind the FIFA's governance challenges and therefore do not address their own challenges.

The common understanding was that it is easy to point out mistakes in others, however, it is critical to address ones own issues in first place.

The Ethics in Sports Symposium Berlin welcomed 200 participants from 15 countries. Speakers included amongst others the international football coach Christoph Daum, the multiple swimming champion Mark Warnecke, Jürgen Trittin and Matthias Schmidt, Members of German Parliament, FIFA Deputy Head of Communication Alexander Koch, UEFA CSR senior manager Patrick Gasser, DFB Vice-President Eugen Gehlenborg, Florian Bauer, Special Sport Political Journalist at German TV ARD, Wendela Kuper, Chair of the EPAS Governing Board at the Council of Europe and Dr. Mustafa Al-Sayed, Secretary General of the Royal Charity Organization Bahrain.

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The World Forum for Ethics in Business is a registered public interest foundation based in Belgium (N° 822.216.342). The mandate of the Forum includes all manners of pursuing and establishing the indispensable ethical foundations of business in a globalized world. The World Forum for Ethics in Business is governed by its President Rajita Kulkarni and its Board Members Dr. Sanjay Pradhan, Vice President for Change, Knowledge and Learning, World Bank; Jo Leinen, Member of European Parliament, Nirj Deva, Member of European Parliament; Madhu Rao, CEO Shangri-La Hotels; Roland Glaser, Former CEO Minerva Schools and Ram Lakhina, Chairman of The Netherlands India Chamber of Commerce and Trade. For further information visit www.wfeb.org.

1. FC Union Berlin is a professional German association football club based in Berlin. The club emerged 1966 under the current name in East Germany and competes in the 2. Bundesliga for the sixth consecutive season. The home ground Stadion An der Alten Försterei (Stadium by the old forester's house) is the largest single-purpose football stadium in the German capital. It has been home to Union Berlin and its forerunners since it was opened in 1920. The club is well known for its enthusiastic and creative fan base, as well as club initiatives over the last two decades and is colloquially called "Eisern Union" (Iron Union). In May 2004, the supporters raised enough money to secure the club's license for fourth-division football through a campaign called 'Bleed for Union'. This catchphrase was not meant metaphorically. One element of the campaign was that fans donated blood to Berlin hospitals and then gave the money they received from the blood bank to their club. In 2008, more than 2,300 fans helped the club to renovate the Stadion An der Alten Försterei. They contributed over 140,000 hours of free labour. The renovation was an essential part of the licence acquisition for the following season. Union Berlin became increasingly attractive for new Berliners, even internationals, who are drawn to the clubs atmosphere. Solidity, sustainability and social responsibility are and remain axiomatic fundamental values of the club's philosophy. President of the association is Dirk Zingler. More on: www.fc-union-berlin.de