

For Immediate Release
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World Players Association launches Universal Declaration of Player Rights

(Washington, D.C.) Today, the world's leading player associations unveiled the **Universal Declaration of Player Rights** (the Declaration) to protect players from ongoing and systemic human rights violations in global sport. The Declaration, the first comprehensive articulation of athletes' rights, sets a benchmark for international sporting organisations to meet their obligations to protect, respect and guarantee the fundamental rights of players.

"The rule books of world sport impose thousands of pages of onerous obligations, but none clearly spell out the internationally recognised human rights of athletes," said **Brendan Schwab, Executive Director of the World Players Association**. "The result is an unjust system of sports law that lacks legitimacy and fails to protect the very people who sit at the heart of sport. We are making it clear that athlete rights can no longer be ignored. They must be able to quickly access justice."

The implementation of the principles set out in the Declaration will introduce long overdue reforms to the governance of sport. Some examples include:

- Every player is entitled to equality of opportunity in the pursuit of sport without distinction of any kind and free of discrimination, harassment and violence.
- Every player has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.
- The rights of every child athlete must be protected.
- Every player has the right to share fairly in the economic activity and wealth of his or her sport which players have helped generate, underpinned by fair and just pay and working conditions.
- Every player has the right to organise and collectively bargain.
- Every player is entitled to have his or her name, image and performance protected. A player's name, image and performance may only be commercially utilised with his or her consent, voluntarily given.
- Every player has the right to a private life, privacy and protection in relation to the collection, storage and transfer of personal data.
- Every player must be able to access an effective remedy when his or her human rights are not respected and upheld. This is particularly crucial given the highly skilled yet short term and precarious nature of the athletic career.

"Men and women from around the world commit their bodies and minds to sport that in almost every case becomes a full time job. The reality is that while we love the game and the people who play it we can never forget that it is the men and women whose work gives us our sport. These union leaders have dedicated themselves to ensuring that all athletes have basic human rights we all deserve," said **DeMaurice Smith, Executive Director of the NFL Players Association and Executive Committee member of the World Players Association**.

The Declaration was developed over the last two years by the more than 100 player associations affiliated to World Players. It has also undergone a thorough review process by human and labour rights experts. It reflects generations of organised players' experiences and incorporates recent feedback from thousands of players provided through wide-ranging surveys conducted by player associations.

It is also firmly anchored in international human rights law and core International Labour Organisation standards.

"The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights establish a global responsibility for business enterprises of all kinds, including sports governing bodies, to respect human rights," said **Rachel Davis, Managing Director of SHIFT, the leading voice on putting into practice the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs)**. "The Declaration builds on the UN Guiding Principles in highlighting the roles of sports bodies and states in preventing and addressing impacts on players' human rights. It confirms that players' rights are central to advancing the broader sports and human rights agenda, and that athletes should have a meaningful say in the matter." The World Players Association's mission is to embed the fundamental human rights in world sport. The Declaration builds on the UNGPs which have been adopted already by major sporting bodies such as the IOC, FIFA, UEFA and the Commonwealth Games Federation following sustained advocacy by the Sport and Rights Alliance (SRA), of which the World Players Association is a committed partner.

"Athletes' rights are human rights. We shouldn't even have to say it, but players are workers and all too often face abuse and discrimination," said **Minky Worden, Director of Global Initiatives at Human Rights Watch, which is a member of the SRA**. "This declaration is a timely reminder that many athletes start their careers as children, that many athletes have to fight for the right to play sports, that athletes have a right to express political views, and to fair and just working conditions and pay."

"World Players is committed to embedding the human rights of everyone in the delivery of sport. It is encouraging to see that governing bodies are now moving towards this same commitment, and we believe that the fundamental rights of players stated in the document cannot be excluded from this process," said **Jonas Bär-Hoffmann, Director Policy and Strategic Relations of FIFPro, the world soccer players' union**.

*The **World Players** Association is the exclusive global voice of organised players and athletes across professional sport. It brings together 85,000 players through more than 100 player associations in over 60 countries. Its role is to ensure that the voice of organised players is heard at the highest levels in the decision-making of international sport.*

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