



PRESS RELEASE

**FIFA vetoes international matches at an altitude of more than 2.500 meters:
The World Mountain People Association (WMPA) refuses this unfair and
unfounded decision and supports Andean governments in their efforts to demand
that FIFA cancel its veto.**

On Sunday May 27, the Executive Committee of the soccer FIFA, in a meeting in Zurich, decided to prohibit international matches at an altitude of more than 2.500 meters on grounds of preserving “players’ health”.

For the World Mountain People Association (WMPA), which brings together organizations of the 5 continents, this decision is unfair and without any medical/scientific ground. It is unfair because it would prevent many Latin American cities of Andean countries such as Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, or Peru, from hosting playoff matches for the 2010 Soccer World Cup, which would have serious economic consequences. It is unfounded because the altitude is less dangerous to the players that heat, sometimes intense in some coastal and lower mountain areas of the American continent. As for sports performance in mountain countries, top competition athletes routinely train on various types of high-altitude environments, as was the case in the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico, where several records were set in spite of the altitude.

For the WMPA, this decision is unacceptable: it is an insult not only for soccer fans of the relevant cities, but also for the people mountain areas around the world, as they are once again despised or stigmatized. We should take advantage of the hosting of the next World cup in the South African Republic – a country with a known history and which recently transformed – to fight for the cancellation of this unfair decision, the symbol of another form of legal apartheid against mountain people!

We thought that this case was totally closed since former French President Jacques Chirac, went to Bolivia and pushed for authorizing the city of La Paz as the location for the playoffs of the 1998 World Cup.

Because our planet is characterized by a diversity of habitats and therefore of the people who lives on it by developing a wide range of adaptations that constitutes our common unique cultural heritage, Because soccer is practiced by people all over the World, stadium are spread all over the countries from the over-polluted megalopolis of our post-industrial era to higher altitude mountainous location, from the dry arid countries to the snowy ones, Because soccer matches and particularly the World Cup have

become a unique celebration of peaceful competition between the people of Earth where each people proudly identifies with its national team, WMPA reiterates the principle of equality among people and among nations in worldwide soccer and think that FIFA should reconsider its decision to band the altitude stadium to host World Cup competition while continuing to insure that all players who have to play in conditions that are not their usual ones should be given enough time to adapt to it.

We affirm that a soccer competition should not become an event to occur in a rat laboratory standardized location but an always reaffirmed appreciation of our diversity as human beings to live on our planet.

We ask the government and the football authorities of the Republic of South-Africa who will host the World Cup 2010 to mobilize themselves for this veto to be undone, allowing the World Cup to continue being a world-scale celebration of sports and of the values of fair play and universal integration.

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