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French Football Team Face Up to Grim Reality of Arms

The French 1998 World Cup soccer champions and their coaches who were defeated in the tournament last week have signed a statement calling on "the French government and the governments of the European Union to take initiatives that will lead to genuine control" of international arms transfers.

The French team statement, expresses concern that most of the victims "of wars being waged at the present time are civilians" and that, "according to UNICEF, eight out of every ten victims are women and children. Children as young as five are being kidnapped, then trained to kill other civilians, including children."

The soccer stars identify "the principal countries responsible for arms exports" as "the United States, France, Great Britain and Russia, who alone account for 80% of world trade."

Echoing the appeal by Amnesty International to the forthcoming Summit of the Group of Eight on 26-27 June, the French team states: "We international footballers join with the many organisations who are calling for a halt to arms sales to countries that violate human rights."

The following is a translation into English of the full statement sent by the French football team. Further information about Amnesty International's appeal to the G8 Summit can be found at <http://web.amnesty.org/G8/>

COLLECTIF CONTROLE DES TRANSFERTS D'ARMES

Amnesty International French Section, Monitoring the Transfer of Arms

*ACAT, Agir ici, CANVA, Justice & Paix, LDH, MAN,
Pax Christi, Réseau Foi et Justice, Survie*

Monitoring the Transfer of Arms to Save Lives!

Every year, millions of people become victims of the arms trade. The International Rescue Committee puts the annual number of deaths as a direct or indirect consequence of the war since 1998 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo at 700,000.

The International Committee of the Red Cross says that over 80% of the victims of wars being waged at the present time are civilians. And according to Unicef, eight out of every ten victims are women and children. Children as young as five are being kidnapped, then trained to kill other civilians, including children.

These people live in countries where the government and armed bands prefer to sell off their country's riches to buy arms rather than secure the sustainable development of the country and the security of their people.

The principal countries responsible for arms exports are the United States, France, Great Britain and Russia, who alone account for 80% of world trade.

Although it is true that in 1988 the governments of the Member States of the European Union adopted a Code of Conduct prohibiting deliveries of arms to countries where they might be used for human rights violations, the code is not strictly applied.

We international footballers join with the many organisations who are calling for a halt to arms sales to countries that violate human rights, and request the French government and the governments of the European Union to take initiatives that will lead to

GENUINE CONTROL!

The following is the list of the football players and coaches who have signed the famous letter:

Lilian Thuram
Fabien Barthez
Christophe Dugarry
Vincente Lizarazu
Djibril Cissé
Emmanuel Petit
Thierry Henry
Johan Micoud
Willy Sagnol
David Trézéguet
Gregory Coupet
Philippe Christanval
Vincent Candela
Alain Boghossian
Iouri Djorkaef
Patrick Viera
Sylvain Wiltord
Michael Sylvestre

Roger Lemerre, coach
Bruno Martini, assistant coach
Guy Stephan, assistant coach

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