Mr Sepp Blatter

FIFA President

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Dear President, Dear Mr Blatter

**Trinidad and Tobago Football Federation – Money owed to the 2006 World Cup team.**

For many the memory of the summer of 2006 is the memory of the FIFA World Cup in Germany, now a somewhat distant but nevertheless a vibrant part of our shared sporting history. For my clients the memory is bittersweet indeed.

This letter is partly about the impending insolvency of the Trinidad and Tobago Football Federation (TTFF) and it is also about the tragic story that sits behind this event, it is also a plea for help. You may be aware that some time ago 16 Trinidad and Tobago 2006 World Cup players took legal action against the Trinidad and Tobago Football Federation (TTFF) to obtain unpaid monies due to them from the 2006 World Cup. There are now 13 left in the fight.

The matter was (or should have been) resolved back in May 2008 when the sport arbitration proceedings in London ruled absolutely in the players’ favour. The TTFF subsequently ignored that decision and attempted to get it overturned in the Trinidad and Tobago High Court, but were unsuccessful.

Despite two principle court judgements, many other court orders and directions, and over 6 years of incurring legal expenses, the TTFF still have not paid the money that the players are contractually and legally entitled to.

Attached are the two principal judgements in their entirety. I believe they make both interesting and telling reading.

These are for the most part not rich footballers. Most of them earned their living playing for League one and League two clubs in England (being the 3rd and 4th tier of the professional game). Some played in the Trinidad & Tobago domestic league where, even now, the average salary is around £500 per month. These players made huge sacrifices and played their hearts out to help Trinidad and Tobago qualify for the 2006 World Cup (a first for this small nation) but have continued to be shabbily treated by the TTFF and it appears also (at least in the past when he had effective control of the federation) by Mr Jack Warner.

The government of Trinidad and Tobago, via a Freedom of Information Act request,confirmed to the players that the TTFF received in excess of £18 million from qualification and participation grants, fees and sponsorships linked to their participation in the 2006 World Cup Finals. Under the terms of the contract agreed by the then TTFF special advisor, Mr Jack Warner on behalf of the TTFF – these football players were entitled to 50% of all sponsorship and commercial revenue, including television rights and the FIFA participation grant.

The TTFF have never seriously disputed the £18 million pound figure, they have quite simply refused to pay.

The TTFF have consistently presented false accounts to the players and the Courts and have claimed that the whereabouts of this £18 million is only known to Mr Warner. Mr Warner claims to have provided the TTFF with all relevant accounts and funds, yet we have clear evidence of millions of dollars passing from TTFF accounts to accounts controlled by Warner. This evidence, as we speak, is on its way to the Trinidad and Tobago High court and the presiding judge.

This picture of opaque and confused accounting may well be familiar to you from other events involving Mr Warner. As an example of how unreliable the accounts of the TTFF are, the FIFA participation grant for the World Cup of CHF 7,000,000, does not appear anywhere in the books and records produced; we are left to speculate at this stage where the FIFA money actually went. Could your finance department identify the account that TTFF used for these transactions, as there appear to be bank accounts that have been hidden from the TTFF auditors and the Court? That would be really helpful.

The TTFF now claim to have no money, and at this time have ignored a court order to make an interim payment of TT $4.26m (approximately £400,000) to the players. The honourable judge made this order in October 2011 and it remains unsatisfied. In early 2012, we executed a levy on the premises of the TTFF in an attempt to seize assets to the value of the interim award. This was a fruitless exercise because a few desks and trophies cannot pay the money due to the players. Despite supposedly not having any money, the TTFF currently have teams playing overseas, have launched their FA trophy competition, have recently relocated to plush new offices and they frequently employ an expensive English QC at an estimated cost of around £25,000 per visit to Trinidad; to assist their legal team in the court case. It seems that someone with huge financial might is willing to fund their legal costs, hence delaying a resolution and frustrating the players.

The players remain determined and are steadfast in their pursuit of justice. But they are suffering, many are family men, many have had their football career ruined as a direct result of this case and the ‘blacklisting’ of them when it came to selecting T&T international teams following the commencement of this dispute.

The TTFF president at the time of the dispute, Oliver Camps, resigned (as a result of a FIFA ethics investigation as you know) and has since been replaced first by an ‘acting President’, Mr Lennox Watson, and now with a permanent elected President, Mr Raymond Tim Kee. It is clear that although there has been a change of Presidents, the attitude of the TTFF towards the players has remained brazen and belligerent.

We recently wrote to Mr Tim Kee requesting his support in ending this case and also requesting that he locate the millions of pounds owed to the TTFF which disappeared during the time when Jack Warner was describing himself as the federation ‘Special Advisor’ (when nobody seriously doubted his effective control over the TTFF). Mr Tim Kee has responded but offered little in terms of finding a solution. The Federation does not seem at the least concerned to investigate what happened to the financial bounty that accrued in 2006 as a result of qualification for the World Cup finals

The government of Trinidad and Tobago have been extremely reluctant to pursue even basic accounting in respect of the money invested in the 2006 World Cup campaign. Mr Jack Warner is the Minister of National Security and perhaps as a consequence the Prime Minister of Trinidad & Tobago has been distinctly quiet on the whole subject. The Prime Minister has received letters over the years seeking her intervention to resolve this matter. She is a qualified lawyer and we had hoped and expected therefore that she would intervene to sort out this mess, but we are constantly ignored.

It is with this background that we appeal to you to intervene. Is there such a thing as the football family? Do FIFA and the Confederations look out for the interests of the professional players, and especially those international players that grace the world stage during FIFA World Cup competitions? Is there any means to help these players and to alleviate the injustice and suffering they have been subjected too for 6 very long years? They are not lawyers or businessmen, they played football (rather well) and they have not been paid for their efforts. Instead they have been subjected to continued and devious litigation tactics designed to avoid or postpone payment. That is not what they signed up to when they agreed to play for the TTFF representative team in the 2006 FIFA World Cup finals in Germany.

Partly as an aside from the issue of false accounting from 2006, when we gained access to TTFF accounts via a court order we discovered that the FIFA FAP funding was being used to pay staff wages. We note that FIFA require that FAP’s main focus must be financing of technical development, planning and administration, as well as youth football within the nations. Therefore we feel that paying salaries of the TTFF staff is a misuse of the funding and may be worthy of an investigation; along with the apparently missing CHF7,000,000.

This case has been going on for over six years now. The TTFF appear to be doing everything in their power to avoid paying the players. It is difficult to say with precision the role that Mr Warner is currently playing in the dispute. It is pretty clear however that he has been very influential in the past, and may still be influential despite apparently cutting his ties to football, and stepping down from all his administrative roles and positions.

We have informed the Federation that we will begin **LIQUIDATION PROCEEDINGS** in the next 6 weeks. We are left with no other choice because the players continue to suffer and they feel the football world has deserted them. We must re-iterate that the TTFF appear to have no intention of voluntarily paying the players, they are continually ignoring orders of the court and the arbitration award, yet they continue to pay their expensive British QC’s and lawyers in a seemingly unending attempt to deny payment of money that is plainly and legally due.

The cause of its insolvency is not known but there has clearly been a lack of proper accounting going back to 2006. It is with regret therefore that the formal winding-up proceedings will have to be commenced. These players do not want to harm football in Trinidad and Tobago; it is an ultimate irony that the TTFF have engineered a situation where the players that were the source of so much national pride now find themselves in the grotesque position of having to liquidate the Federation they were once honoured to play for. This is a tragedy and it should never have been allowed to happen.

Please do not accept any ‘Phoenix’ organisation that attempts to rise in place of the TTFF, or any federation that any rogue individual may attempt to form purporting to represent T&T football. Until the players are paid there can be no legitimate national football federation in T&T.

We have no wish to see our fellow footballers prevented from playing international football, however the TTFF had over six years to adhere to their contractual obligations. They have ignored not just the players but also the sports specific arbitration process that the TTFF insisted on, and the various orders of The Trinidad and Tobago High Court. Will they also ignore FIFA?

The motto of FIFA is, “**FOR THE GOOD OF THE GAME”.**What these players have endured at the hands of one of your member federations for over six years makes a mockery of that. We need your support in this matter so Trinidad and Tobago can again have the opportunity to grace the world stage and so that justice can be done for a group of committed football players. These players have done nothing wrong, they have represented their country at a FIFA World Cup finals competition and for that they agreed a payment structure with their employer federation. That federation is not fit to govern football in Trinidad & Tobago based on its refusal to pay the players the amount of money agreed, and the continual evasion of their responsibility through years and years of laborious court process.

Other than refuse to recognise any ‘Phoenix’ federation that tries to emerge from the ashes of the TTFF (at least for so long as the players remain unpaid) is their anything else you can do to force the TTFF to pay these players?

Is FIFA itself in a position to make a payment to these players and thereafter made a consequential deduction from any distribution to the TTFF by way of recoupment?

One final thought as to how we could all work collaboratively for **the good of the Game** in Trinidad & Tobago. The Court has ordered TTFF to sue Mr Warner for disclosure of the accounts they say he has AND for payment of the money the TTFF say he retained from commercial activities connected to the 2006 World Cup. The TTFF have refused to do so. It may be that they don’t really want to sue Mr Warner at all, but their excuse before the Court is that they don’t have the money to sue him; note the inconsistent logic here when they can find tens of thousands of CHF to litigate AGAINST the players but not a cent to pursue their accounts.

On the evidence before us Mr Warner may have received and retained millions of dollars that was properly due to the TTFF, at least it appears that he knows what happened to that money. So there is a possible debt owing from Warner to TTFF, and if that money could be recovered by TTFF then football on the islands of Trinidad & Tobago would receive a massive boost. Will FIFA insist, possibly as a condition of future funding (assuming we could avoid the liquidation scenario), that TTFF does what it told the High Court it would do, and bring legal proceedings against Mr Warner to discover and recover the 2006 funds?

We will copy this letter to the President of CONCACAF to see if that Confederation will also join in with these possible initiatives for the good of the Game in Trinidad & Tobago and the CONCACAF region.

On behalf of the below players may we wish you a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year.