Message of Support by Mr. Wilfried Lemke
Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General
on Sport for Development and Peace

“Milan 2009 Homeless World Cup”

The United Nations considers sport as a powerful tool to promote education, health, development and peace. Sport unites people of all social classes, cultures and religions in a positive and educational way.

As the Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, it is with great pleasure that I offer my support to the “Milan 2009 Homeless World Cup”, a football initiative which has been uniting teams of homeless people to take a once in a lifetime opportunity to represent their country and change their lives forever.

The Homeless World Cup initiative is an extraordinary example of the application of sport as a tool for community development. The Homeless World Cup has triggered the establishment of over 50 local grass roots projects working with people who are homeless and excluded from society.

The impact of the Homeless World Cup has been consistently significant with a large majority of players changing their lives for the better, by coming off drugs and alcohol, moving into jobs, education, homes, training, reuniting with families and some even going on to become players and coaches for professional or semi-professional football teams.

Considering the increase in the number of participating teams from 18 national teams in the year 2003 to 48 national teams for the current event in Milan, the Homeless World Cup is well on the way to realizing its vision - a healthy, abundant, confident world where everyone has a home, a basic human right.

The initiative has been a very successful means to raise awareness of issue surrounding the homeless and to improve the image of homeless people amongst the general public. The positive impact that this project has been able to have on individuals from more than 70 countries makes it an initiative that deserves any additional support it can obtain.

I look forward to a continued collaboration with the Homeless World Cup initiative and wish all participants the very best in this life-changing experience!

Wilfried Lemke
Under-Secretary-General
Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace