



Implementing the United 2026 Human Rights Strategy

April 12, 2019

Carlos Cordiero
President, U.S. Soccer Federation
1801 S. Prairie Avenue
Chicago, IL 60616

Dear Mr. Cordiero:

As organizations that support labor and human rights, we write this open letter to congratulate the soccer federations of United States, Mexico, and Canada (“United”) on the successful bid to host the 2026 FIFA World Cup in North America, and **to request a meeting with you to discuss implementation of the ground-breaking United Human Rights Strategy.**

The *United Human Rights Strategy* will draw considerable attention as the first to fulfill FIFA’s new requirement of a human rights strategy and be accepted as part of a successful bid to host the games. As you know, the requirement is designed to overcome serious abuses that have plagued construction of World Cup facilities, including in tournaments hosted by Russia (2018) and Qatar (2022), as well as to address human and labor rights abuses in supply chains for licensed merchandise for World Cup events. In the aftermath of corruption scandals, human rights abuses, and numerous worker deaths, FIFA added the human rights criteria to bids for the 2026 World Cup. FIFA now requires hosts of the World Cup to use their leverage and influence to ensure that human rights are respected through impact assessments, ongoing due diligence, remediation, and transparency—which are central to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The *United Human Rights Strategy* covers public procurement in host cities and (related supply chains) and serves as a model for licensed goods in FIFA’s supply chains.

As the World Cup returns to North America for the first time in three decades, U.S. Soccer, which will host the largest number of matches, holds the leadership position and responsibility to implement the *United Human Rights Strategy*, and we urge you to do so without delay. Our organizations are eager to work with you. Moreover, we will work as a coalition to contribute our experience and expertise in worker rights, remedies, monitoring, and procurement in order to fulfill FIFA’s call to “imbed and implement” human rights in the 2026 tournament.

Starting in 2020, the *United Human Rights Strategy* requires consultation with stakeholders including local officials, trade unions, community representatives, human rights advocates, and other civil society groups. These contributions are essential to evaluate human and labor rights conditions and concerns in the 17 municipalities competing to be one of the 10 host cities in the United States so that appropriate and effective policies can be devised to address the deficits. With key decisions for host-country operations less than a year away, little time remains to engage with organizations that have the capacity to inform each of the strategy’s objectives.

Decisions by 2020

The North American World Cup tournament will require less construction of new facilities than predecessor tournaments in Russia and Qatar, but there will still be extensive upgrades of stadiums, infrastructure, and security that entail procurement of construction services and imported materials or technology. As FIFA's Human Rights Advisory Board has noted, the 2026 World Cup will be the first to fully embed FIFA's commitment to monitor human rights compliance in World Cup supply chains. (HRAB 2nd Report, Sept. 2018, pp. 39, 40, 60, 62, 78, 79).

United's strategy commits to the following objectives:

1. ***Competition for host cities that requires*** guidance for competition among cities (e.g., a scorecard) to compete for selection to host World Cup matches based on the strength of their:
 - a. ***Local labor policies*** that apply construction, transportation, food service, security, stadium operations, and other logistics.
 - b. ***Supply-chain management policies*** for public procurement and human rights.
 - c. ***Strategy*** to address any gaps in laws or practice for human rights risks identified.
 - d. ***Operating policies*** to protect human rights during the tournament in 2026.
2. ***Supply-chain management that requires***
 - a. Before any contracts are signed, ***a robust sourcing code*** to govern supply chains for procurement and licensing based on core conventions of the International Labor Organization; international conventions on human trafficking; protections for women workers; compliance with domestic law on wages, hours, and workplace safety and health; and benchmark comparison to a living wage.
 - b. ***Preferences for suppliers*** that are transparent, recognize unions, and demonstrate respect for worker rights.
 - c. ***An internet-based transparency platform*** for a consortium of purchasers to promote accountability of contractors and subcontractors.
 - d. ***Monitoring of partnerships*** together with independent organizations that have international networks for worker-centered monitoring of supply chains.
 - e. ***Remedies*** and grievance mechanisms for workers.

Request for engagement, timelines, and transparency

We propose a meeting in Washington, D.C., on Friday, April 26 or as soon as possible, to discuss a timeline that includes (a) initial contributions from stakeholder groups, (b) publication of proposed policies for public comment, and (c) dates for final decisions on operating policies and contracts by FIFA and United 2026.

In addition, we seek the earliest possible disclosure of United's management structure, points of contact for implementing the human rights strategy, and an estimate of the likely scope (numbers of items or dollar figures) of procurement and licensing contracts. Regarding "**Leadership and Staffing**" outlined on page 445 of the Bid Book, we welcome United 2026's approach to promoting diversity and inclusion, and look forward to hearing how those commitments will be implemented.

In conclusion, we commend the strides that United 2026 and FIFA have made in developing a human rights strategy that is fueled by robust stakeholder engagement. We stand ready to fulfill our promise to support full implementation of that strategy with research, risk assessment, and contribution of model policies. Further, just as we urge United to implement its strategy, we will also urge FIFA to implement parallel policies for FIFA-licensed goods and services.

The *United Human Rights Strategy* is unprecedented; it has the potential to improve working conditions for tens of thousands of workers, both within host cities and the global supply chains that support them. Doing so will transform the image and impact of the World Cup in 2026 and the games that follow. We look forward to supporting its full implementation.

Please respond to this letter by replying to Minky Worden, Director of Global Initiatives at Human Rights Watch, at wordenm@hrw.org (212-216-1250).

Respectfully submitted by the following organizations:

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