

**EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON INTEGRITY IN SPORT**

*A two-day international conference for representatives from national European Football associations and law enforcement, was recently held in Rome. The conference focused on enhancing the prevention and investigation of match-fixing in football. Interpol within its education alliance with Fifa and Uefa and the active support of the Italian Department of Public Security brought together 200 delegates from 50 countries and 20 international organizations to discuss the threats posed on football.*

*During the conference speakers looked at current and anticipated future trends in match-fixing, the impact the Asian betting markets are having and the adverse influence organized crime has on football. In addition, ways of enhancing good governance in the football family, the importance of protecting players and initiatives in training, education, prevention and education were highlighted. The conference recognized the challenge posed by match-fixing in many countries in Europe. It noted with concern the involvement of organized crime and professional criminals in match-fixing and associated illegal activities including irregular betting. The conference also recognized that match-fixing is a global issue having negative effect upon football, its participants, families and the general public who watch sport as an entertainment in the belief that it is a fair and honest game. In order to tackle match-fixing more effectively, delegates recognized:*

- *The need to continue building effective partnerships between all stakeholders who can contribute to the development of effective procedures – football associations, law enforcement, gambling regulatory authorities, betting companies, players and referees associations, government departments and media.*
- *Sharing of information of how to prevent and investigate match-fixing.*
- *The development of co-ordination procedures to ensure that best decisions can be made about how to proceed with prevention and investigation.*
- *The need to develop and implement a broad range of prevention activities through education and training various participants in football – players, officials and administrators, especially youngsters.*

*It is clear for everyone to see that the problem of match-fixing in football is not only the National Associations' responsibility to control. All football lovers are part of the fight and with the help of all those who honestly care about the game, the only way forward is a united front against the criminals who are capitalizing on our football.*

*The criticism levelled at football authorities about not being able to bring the situation under control, is absolutely unjustified. We all need to understand that we have now moved to a different level of bribery and corruption which goes beyond football. We are now facing a slow but sure death to our game, and it is not the MFA's sole responsibility to make every effort to safeguard football on our island. Why are legislators and law enforcers not tackling match-fixing in a more serious and efficient manner? Is it because of lack of resources, grading of priorities, or have they not realized the perilous state we are in? Perhaps they do not have enough knowledge about this dangerous threat. It is their total responsibility to protect the general public from this outright and barefaced criminality. **This is not football.ft***