Horn of Africa the biggest winner at UN charity soccer match

13 December 2011 –
The annual Match Against Poverty, which brings together dozens of soccer stars and United Nations Goodwill Ambassadors to spotlight the UN's efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and help people in need, turned into an on-field goalfest today.

An all-star team led by Brazil's Ronaldo and France's Zinédine Zidane, both Goodwill Ambassadors and previous World Cup champions, edged out another all-star team from Hamburger Sport-Verein (HSV) 5-4.

But there was another winner. The match, played in Hamburg's Imtech Arena this evening, drew a capacity crowd and is expected to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for this year's focus –

tackling the ongoing food crisis across the Horn of Africa, which has left an estimated 13 million people in the region dependent on humanitarian assistance.

Before the game, Mr. Zidane stressed that the match was "much more than a game: it is part of the global fight against poverty."

This year's participants included a series of current and former star players, such as Didier Drogba of Cote d'Ivoire, Italy's Fabio Cannavaro and Portugal's Luis Figo.

Mr. Drogba, making his debut in the Match Against Poverty, said he was honoured to participate.

"I encourage everyone to pull together to end this crisis," he said.

The UN Development Programme (UNDP), which will receive two thirds of the match proceeds, has said it will use them to bolster humanitarian efforts in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, where the UN is providing food, water, shelter and health services to those afflicted.

Proceeds from previous Matches Against Poverty – there have been nine in total – have benefited projects in more than 27 developing countries, including recovery efforts in the wake of the 2010 Haiti earthquake and last year's devastating floods in Pakistan.

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