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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NOTTINGHAM FOREST, HARVARD UNIVERSITY AND THE LILIAN THURAM FOUNDATION LEAD THE WAY WITH LANDMARK CONFERENCE ON ANTI-RACISM AND GENDER EQUALITY IN EUROPEAN FOOTBALL

- Conference is the fourth of its kind in the longstanding collaboration between Evangelos Marinakis and The Weatherhead Center at Harvard University -

Nottingham Forest, The Weatherhead Center at Harvard University and The Lilian Thuram Foundation are proud to announce a landmark conference aimed at tackling the issues of racism and gender inequality in European football.

The conference, which is being championed by Forest owner Evangelos Marinakis, will take place at Nottingham Forest's City Ground from 30 January to 1 February.

The joint initiative between Nottingham Forest and The Weatherhead Center at Harvard University seeks to create a platform for in-depth debates on the challenges of racial and gender equity in the game. The event will bring together experts, academics, industry leaders, current and former players and football fans to explore the issues and drive positive change in the sport.

Leading names in football, including Lilian Thuram, Thierry Henry, Christian Karembeu, Robert Pires, Olivier Dacourt, Zé Maria, Viv Anderson and Stan Collymore, together with current Forest players, will join the world's leading academics from the revered US institution, wider academia and industry experts to forge new ideas and solutions over the two-day conference.

Eminent academics and professionals in the women's game will also unite on the second day of the conference to debate gender-based issues in the sport and explore existing barriers to inclusivity for women and girls.

Key delegates include Bex Smith, former New Zealand player and CEO of Crux Sports, Kat Craig, sports human rights lawyer, Heidi Beha, Team Lead Development Programmes - Member Associations at FIFA, Ruma Bose, best-selling author, advisor and board member to a variety of global organisations and Elisabet Spiza, Head of Women's Football at AC Milan.

The aim of the summit is to deliver landmark agreements on new anti-racism and gender equality actions that Nottingham Forest and the summit's delegates will present to the sport's governing bodies and fellow European clubs.

Nottingham Forest owner Evangelos Marinakis has a strong history of collaboration with Harvard University. In 2016 Marinakis' Greek club Olympiacos initiated the first event in their historic partnership, with an Olympiacos delegation attending the inaugural conference in Boston.

A year later, Olympiacos hosted Harvard University for the second conference in Piraeus, Athens. That summit aimed to find solutions to widening accessibility to football across borders in a globalised world.

The outcome of the 2017 summit was a memorandum of understanding entitled '*The Athens Principle on the Right to Participate in Sports*', signed by some of Europe's leading clubs including Barcelona, Real Madrid, Fenerbahce and Sporting Lisbon. The following year the collaboration returned to Boston to debate issues of participation, inclusion and social responsibility in global sports."

For the 2024 edition of the conference, delegates will first convene at The City Ground in Nottingham on Tuesday 30 January and enjoy the Premier League fixture between Nottingham Forest and Arsenal.

Wednesday 31 January will see delegates debate initiatives to fight racism in the game and empower players and fans to take positive action. Former and current players, led by Lilian Thuram, will then convene for a workshop on athlete activism; finding solutions that empower players to utilise their voices and platforms to drive meaningful change.

The final session of the day will involve delegates from Nottingham Forest's rich network of supporters groups to debate fans' role in challenging racism in the sport.

Rounding off the first day of the conference, Nottingham Forest, The Weatherhead Center at Harvard University and The Lilian Thuram Foundation will host a gala

dinner at the city's Council House. The dinner will be a chance for delegates to unite with politicians, business leaders and high-profile names from across the football industry, the city of Nottingham and the wider region.

The second day of the conference will focus on gender inequality in European football, evaluating the state of the women's game across the continent and the challenges and solutions required to improve equality and inclusivity in the sport. Women's supporters groups will participate to share their views on what needs to be done to effect positive change from the fans' perspective.

Nottingham Forest owner Evangelos Marinakis said:

"I am delighted to welcome once again the academics from The Weatherhead Center at Harvard University and all those attending as we continue this important collaboration. I am particularly proud to welcome delegates to the wonderful city of Nottingham and to Nottingham Forest for this year's conference.

"It is a sad reality that racism, prejudice and gender inequality continues to pervade our sport. This has no place in our game, nor in society. Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion has never been more important if we want to see the continued growth and success of European football and feel truly proud of the game we love.

"Our football clubs should be a reflection of the communities we serve and I believe football can lead the way in tackling wider societal problems. I am pleased that our current players have shown their eagerness to collaborate with the trailblazers who have gone before them, together with some of the world's best academic minds and industry leaders to drive these vital conversations forward.

"Those who don't believe in an equitable society for all - in sport and in all aspects of our everyday lives, irrespective of race, gender or ability - should fear obsolescence. It is them who will be left behind as we progress.

"To those involved in this week's conference I say all power to you; harness your platform and your influence to create real and meaningful change for the sport we love, the societies we represent and the inclusive future we all wish to see."

Lilian Thuram said:

“The world of football does not realise the extent to which racism psychologically damages and destroys the people who are its victims. The proof is that those who are victims end up being afraid to denounce it.

“Let's free the voices of the victims. We do not have to accept this harassment, and I am confident that this conference will make progress towards racial justice.”

-ENDS-

Notes to editors:

Filming, photography and interview opportunities during the conference and the gala dinner will be available on request.

Notable delegates include:

- **Evangelos Marinakis** (owner of Nottingham Forest and Olympiacos FC)
- **Lilian Thuram** (World Cup winner 1998, EURO winner 2000)
- **Thierry Henry** (FIFA World Player of the Year, World Cup Winner 1998)
- **Robert Pires** (World Cup winner 1998, EURO winner 2000)
- **Olivier Dacourt** (Double Serie A winner)
- **Gilles Grimandi** (Double Premier League winner)
- **Jose Marcelo Ferreira – Ze Maria** (Copa America winner 1997)
- **Eni Aluko MBE** (Three-time FA WSL winner and former England international)
- **Rachel Yankey OBE** (Two-time FA WSL winner and former England international)
- **John McGovern** (Double European Cup winner 1979 and 1980)
- **Paul Elliott CBE** (Former Chelsea player and Charlton FC Board member)
- **Viv Anderson MBE** (Former England and Nottingham Forest player)
- **Ian Storey-Moore** (Former England and Nottingham Forest player)
- **Stan Collymore** (Former England and Nottingham Forest player)
- **Justin Morrow** (Former USMNT player and founder of Black Players for Change)
- **Gareth Farrelly** (Former Republic of Ireland international)
- **Lewis McGugan** (Former Nottingham Forest player)
- **Julian Bennett** (Former Nottingham Forest player)
- **Jason Lee** (Former Nottingham Forest player)
- **Wes Morgan** (Former Nottingham Forest player)
- **Marlon Harewood** (Former Nottingham Forest player)
- **Leon Mann MBE** (Founder of BCOMS and co-founder of Football Black List)
- **Bex Smith** (Former New Zealand player and CEO of Crux Sports)
- **Kat Craig** (Sports human rights lawyer)
- **Heidi Beha** (Team Lead Development Programmes - Member Associations at FIFA)
- **Ruma Bose** (Best-selling author, advisor and board member to a variety of global organisations)
- **Elisabet Spiza** (Head of Women's Football, AC Milan)
- **Nuno Espírito Santo** (Nottingham Forest FC Head Coach)
- **Carly Davies** (Nottingham Forest FC Head Coach)

Together with a number of current Nottingham Forest Men's and Women's team players.

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