*for immediate release*

**AFC surrenders to illegal Saudi pressure on its official broadcaster as   
Confederation unilaterally breaches beIN’s multi-million dollar regional rights deal**

**SINGAPORE, HONG KONG, DOHA, LONDON – 13 March 2019** **–** In response to the extraordinary announcement by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) this morning that it will live-stream matches featuring Saudi Arabian clubs in the AFC Asian Champions League for free into Saudi Arabia on the AFC’s own digital channels, beIN is set to launch a major international legal dispute against the Confederation for material breach of its multi-million dollar broadcast agreement.

Nearly 18 months ago, Saudi Arabia unlawfully and overnight forced beIN MEDIA GROUP (beIN), the legitimate pay-TV broadcaster for all AFC competitions in MENA, out of the country. Rather than tackling Saudi Arabia’s illegal measures against its legitimate broadcaster, the AFC – in apparent collusion with the Saudi Arabian Football Federation (SAFF) – has unilaterally decided to live-stream Saudi-related matches into Saudi Arabia geo-blocked on the AFC’s Facebook Live and YouTube channels.

In what is a clear political move by the AFC seemingly in full collaboration with SAFF (which pre-emptively announced the AFC’s plans 24 hours earlier), the Confederation’s decision undermines the central condition of its regional broadcast agreement with beIN, namely the grant of exclusive rights. beIN is immediately set to launch international legal proceedings against the AFC as a result. beIN will continue to broadcast all its rights, including all AFC tournaments and matches, on its channels across the MENA region.

In caving into Saudi Arabia’s illegal actions against beIN and effectively endorsing Saudi Arabia’s notorious ongoing piracy operation beoutQ, the AFC is not only in material breach of its multi-million dollar broadcast agreement with beIN, but its actions threaten the business model that sports rights holders all around the world rely on.

beIN has been the long-standing broadcast partner of the AFC in the MENA region and other territories for nearly 10 years, being one of the most significant revenue streams for the AFC and helping to fund and support the rapid development of Asian football during that time. Every game of the AFC’s flagship global tournament in January this year – the 2019 AFC Asian Cup featuring 24 national teams across Asia – was broadcast illegally on beoutQ, which Saudi Arabia has developed into the most sophisticated illegal broadcaster in history, inserting its own logos and branding; selling subscriptions; carrying separate advertising; and even adding its own commentary.

**Yousef Al-Obaidly, Chief Executive Officer, beIN MEDIA GROUP, said:***“The AFC’s decision to live-stream directly into Saudi Arabia on the AFC’s own digital platforms is a material breach of our multi-million dollar regional broadcast agreement and we will immediately be launching a major international dispute to recover damages and protect our position. The AFC’s decision is not only a self-harming commercial decision and a clear political play with Saudi Arabia, but most damagingly it will impact rights holders across sports and entertainment around the world. There is now no guaranteed protection of intellectual property in the region due to the AFC in effect endorsing Saudi Arabia’s theft of world sport and wholesale disregard for the international rule of law.”*

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**ABOUT beIN MEDIA GROUP**

beIN MEDIA GROUP, chaired by Nasser Al-Khelaifi, is an independent company established in 2014 with a vision to become the leading global sport and entertainment network. Today, beIN distributes an unrivalled array of entertainment, live sport action, and major international events across 5 continents, in 43 countries, and in 7 different languages spanning Europe, North America, Asia, Australia and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

beIN MEDIA GROUP’s sports network, **beIN SPORTS**, holds the single largest portfolio of sports rights of any global broadcaster. It covers the best and most exciting sports in the world including football (all top global leagues and competitions), basketball (NBA and Euroleague), motor sports (Formula 1 and Moto GP), American football (NFL), cricket, rugby, tennis, cycling, badminton, volleyball, college sports and more. beIN MEDIA GROUP also provides subscribers in the MENA region and Turkey with a vast portfolio of proprietary and third-party entertainment channels through beIN and Digiturk platforms. Through its iconic **MIRAMAX** film studio, beIN also holds an extensive library of legendary Hollywood blockbusters and a growing presence in series and movies production.

beIN MEDIA GROUP uses the latest technology to ensure that its viewers receive thrilling entertainment in high definition, on a platform that suits them best. beIN recently launched the first 24-hour 4K channel in the MENA region – beIN 4K – that broadcasts the biggest sports matches and events exclusively in breathtaking 4K quality. It also offers over-the-top live (OTT) broadcasting and catch-up services across all devices though beIN CONNECT.

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