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## ECB update on ICC Men's Champions Trophy match against Afghanistan

Richard Thompson, ECB Chair, said:

“Today the ECB Board discussed recent calls for England to boycott the forthcoming men’s Champions Trophy match against Afghanistan in the wake of the widespread violation of women’s rights in the country under the Taliban.

“What is happening in Afghanistan is nothing short of gender apartheid. At a cricketing level, when women’s and girls’ cricket is growing rapidly around

the world it is heartbreaking that those growing up in Afghanistan are denied this opportunity, but the appalling oppression of women and girls by the Taliban goes so much further.

“The Board recognises there are different views and opinions on the issue of boycotting the match and has listened carefully. We have been in close contact with the Government, the International Cricket Council (ICC), our England Men’s players and other stakeholders to discuss this matter, as well as considering how best the ECB can support those women cricketers who have fled Afghanistan.

“Following this, we remain of the view that a co-ordinated international response by the cricketing community is the appropriate way forward, and will achieve more than any unilateral action by the ECB in boycotting this match, while we have also heard that for many ordinary Afghans, watching their cricket team is one of the few remaining sources of enjoyment. As such, we can confirm that we will play this fixture.

“We have used this situation to renew our efforts to support those female cricketers in exile. Last week the ECB donated £100,000 to the Global Refugee Cricket Fund, launched by the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) and its charity the MCC Foundation to support refugees worldwide, including work to empower and support players from the former Afghanistan Women’s Cricket Team.

“We will continue to press the ICC to take further action, including ringfencing a meaningful portion of funding to support female players from Afghanistan to be able to access cricket and considering recognising an Afghanistan Women’s Refugee Team, as well as supporting and developing displaced Afghan women to thrive in non-playing roles such as coaches and administrators.

“The cricketing community cannot tackle all of Afghanistan’s problems. But we urge our international partners to stand together and demonstrate through our actions that we support the women and girls of Afghanistan, including those cricketers now in exile who just want to play and should be allowed to play the sport they love.”

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