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MEDIA RELEASE
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Decision on Christchurch's hosting of Rugby World Cup 2011 matches

- Stadium Christchurch requires extensive repairs, timeframes uncertain
- Quarter- finals reallocated to Eden Park
- Pool matches to be reallocated to other RWC 2011 venues
- Existing ticket holders to be offered refund or tickets to reallocated matches

Rugby World Cup 2011 (RWC 2011) Tournament partners have today reluctantly decided that Christchurch will be unable to host the seven matches scheduled to be played at Stadium Christchurch and these will be rescheduled to be played at other venues in New Zealand.

The decision was unanimously supported by Tournament owners the International Rugby Board, the New Zealand Government, the New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU) and Tournament organiser Rugby New Zealand 2011 (RNZ 2011).

This follows a detailed review of reports assessing damage to key Tournament facilities and infrastructure caused by the devastating 6.3 magnitude earthquake that struck the city on February 22 and advice from the stadium operator, Vbase that it could not provide an absolute assurance that all necessary remedial work could be completed in time for RWC 2011.

International Rugby Board Chairman Bernard Lapasset travelled to Christchurch for today's announcement.

"Yesterday we were informed by Stadium Christchurch operator Vbase that it could not guarantee that the extensive repairs required for both the stadium structures and the playing surface could be completed in time. That information means that Tournament partners have been left with no choice but to make the difficult decision to reallocate the seven matches due to be played in Christchurch.

"This has been a hard decision for all involved, given the place of Canterbury in New Zealand Rugby and the tremendous enthusiasm and support that the people of Christchurch have displayed for RWC 2011. The thoughts of the global Rugby family continue to be with the people of Christchurch and everyone affected as they focus on the city's rebuilding process and repair of key public services and facilities."

Ticket purchasers for all Christchurch matches will be offered the option of a refund or the opportunity to secure tickets to the relevant reallocated matches. RNZ 2011 has confirmed there will be sufficient availability

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of tickets to rescheduled matches for those wanting to take up that option. Full details will be provided by the end of March. Further information can be found at www.rugbyworldcup.com/tickets.

Vbase has indicated that the repair timeframes are so tight there would be no leeway for work delays or for any risks. This prevents Vbase giving assurances that it can meet its RWC 2011 obligations.

Among the "risks" identified by Vbase:

- Ongoing investigation required that might reveal the need for further work in relation to structures and playing surface
- Complexity of a work programme that includes superficial and structural repairs and full replacement of the playing surface
- Availability of resources (labour, material and equipment) and timeliness of securing consents
- Aftershocks that might impact on the work programme

"We know Cantabrians are passionate about Rugby and we know that many wanted the matches to remain as a way to unite and heal their shattered city," said RNZ 2011 Chairman Brian Roche.

"However, we needed to weigh up the risks of continuing with matches in Christchurch with just 25 weeks to kick-off to the world's third largest sporting event. Sadly, we collectively agreed the risks were too great. The timeframes for repairs were too tight, the uncertainty too much."

"Our hearts go out to Canterbury fans today given the inevitable disappointment this decision will cause for many," said NZRU CEO and RNZ 2011 director Steve Tew.

"We are looking into a number of initiatives that will give Cantabrians a chance to be part of our Stadium of Four Million. We still want them to play a part in hosting a successful Tournament and to share in the excitement of this event."

Contingency planning is at an advanced stage, but the process of allocation of matches is complex with many factors to consider, including accommodation, transport and broadcast logistics.

Eden Park is confirmed as the venue for the quarter-finals of October 8 and 9 and a decision regarding where the five pool matches will now be played will be taken jointly by the Tournament's partners as soon as feasibly possible, likely before the end of March.

"Eden Park was the only logical alternative to stage two of the Tournament's premier matches given the ground capacity and visitor accommodation demands associated with these quarter-final matches," said RNZ 2011 CEO Martin Snedden.

"We are working hard to ensure as many pool matches as reasonably possible remain in the South Island. A key consideration in all of this is to reschedule matches in a way that minimises the impact on other matches and therefore causes the least disruption to existing arrangements for teams and travelling.

"We appreciate this is a time of great uncertainty for fans which is why we are trying to resolve all issues as quickly as possible.

"We are enormously grateful for the support of all our partners in New Zealand during this difficult process and in particular the strenuous efforts by Vbase in attempting to meet our requirements."

Ends

About Rugby New Zealand 2011 Ltd (RNZ 2011): RNZ 2011 was established in June 2006, following the selection of the New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU) as the Host Union for RWC 2011 by the IRB Council in November 2005. It is the organisation responsible for the planning and delivery of RWC 2011 in New Zealand on behalf of its shareholders, the NZRU and the New Zealand Government.

About IRB Rugby World Cup: IRB Rugby World Cup is the third largest sports event in the world. The inaugural Tournament took place in 1987 and it is held every four years. In 2007 the sixth Tournament was held in France and enjoyed a cumulative worldwide broadcast audience of more than four billion.

For the latest on RWC 2011 visit www.rugbyworldcup.com.

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