

73RD **FIFA**[®] CONGRESS 2023

FIFA President's Address

BK Arena, Kigali, Rwanda - Thursday, 16 March 2023



FIFA President's Address

1: Welcome

Dear Excellency, President of the Republic of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, my dear brother, dear Vice-Presidents, (FIFA) Council members, Presidents of associations, delegates, (FIFA) Legends who make our hearts beat, friends, media, welcome. Welcome to Kigali. Welcome to Rwanda.

Bienvenue, bienvenidos, ahlan wa sahan, willkommen, bem-vindos, and, I don't know, all other languages of the world. Welcome to this beautiful place for the 73rd FIFA Congress.

Dear President, it is a historic Congress because it is the first FIFA electoral Congress taking place in Africa. And this first FIFA electoral Congress taking place in Africa happens after the first FIFA men's World Cup taking place in the Middle East. And this first FIFA electoral Congress happening in Africa happens before the first (FIFA) Women's World Cup happening in the southern hemisphere, in Australia and New Zealand.

So, it is definitely a day of firsts, a day of celebrations, and also a day of reminding and remembering where we were, where we are, and where we want to be. And I would like, in this short welcome, to tell you two little stories, if I may.

The first one is about this ball here, which proudly says 'made in Rwanda'. So, this ball has been manufactured by some women, some ladies, who survived the genocide in this country. And to have a life, they are producing many beautiful things, amongst these things, footballs. Footballs to give smiles and joy and hope to children all over the world, but mainly, of course, here in Rwanda. So, I would like to start by challenging all of you, those who want, of course, to buy one of these balls. Buy one of these balls. Contact any one of my office or of Fatma (Samoura)'s office; the price is USD 1,000. You buy it, and all the money will go to these women who are producing so many good things for children all over the world. Please do so. And if you cannot put USD 1,000, put whatever you can; we will put the difference.

The second story I want to tell you about this beautiful country is that it has a particular relation with me. When I was campaigning to become FIFA President, Rwanda hosted the CHAN, the African Nations Championship. And I came full of hope twice to Rwanda. First, for the opening game, where I met many African associations, and then I came back for the final game. The first time I came, I was full of energy and full of hope. And the second time I came, I was told, "Well, you know, we all love you but, actually, we're not going to support you in the election".

So, of course, I was pretty depressed, about to give up, I had already packed, and suddenly – I don't even know, President, if you know (about) that – suddenly, somebody came to see me and he gave me a ticket for the match of the final because I had no ticket for the final match that, by the way, the DR [Congo] won. And he told me, "This is a ticket offered to you by President Paul Kagame". And then, I decided, I thought about it, and I remembered my visit to the memorial – and you all should go to visit the memorial, all of you. And I said, "Who am I to give up?" What this country has suffered and how this country came back up is inspiring for the entire world, dear President.

So, I certainly couldn't give up because somebody was telling me something. I stayed, I attended the match, I continued to campaign, I was elected FIFA President a few months later. But, most importantly, I witnessed how this country flourished. And this country flourished with nothing, starting from nothing, with hope, with compassion, with commitment, with hard work and with leadership. And today, it's a beautiful country and I'm sure that everyone here will come back with their friends and their families to visit not only Kigali, but also, the rural areas, the gorillas and all the beauties that you can see here and in the neighbouring countries, of course, of this beautiful continent which is Africa.

Dear President, we brought the world of football here today, 211 (member associations), many (FIFA) Legends, many friends, we brought them here to celebrate football. We know that football is the most important thing in the world, and that's why, for today, Kigali is the capital of the world. Thank you very much. Let's have a look at the video and after, I'll give the floor to His Excellency, Paul Kagame.

2: Main address

So dear Vice-Presidents, (FIFA) Council members, Presidents, delegates, (FIFA) Legends, family, friends, often the same.

This is a very special address, of course, or should be a special address because it is the address taking place at an electoral Congress, the first electoral Congress of FIFA taking place in Africa. Even if I'm running unopposed - and I would like to thank you in advance for all your support, which means a lot to me - I think it is important to highlight on such a day, some of the achievements of the last four years and some of the projects for the next four years, so I hope you're ready for that, because everything that we did, everything that I did as your President, everything that we did with our team, we tried to do it for all of you, for each and every one of you here, for each and every football fan out there.

We should always remember one thing, which is that FIFA is an association of associations of 211 countries from all over the world. 211, more than the United Nations. For FIFA, each and every one of these countries has exactly the same duties and exactly the same rights, including the right to be respected for what he is and what he does, for what she is and what she does. We want to unite and we want to include. We want to make football truly global. So, I don't like to speak about myself normally, but sometimes maybe you have to, because I'm the President and you have to take some responsibility.

So what did I promise you? Well, I promised you - and very few believed it - that we would experience the best (FIFA) World Cup ever, and we delivered. We organised the best (FIFA) World Cup ever. We had five billion viewers all over the world. We had three million fans in the stadiums, we had teams from five different continents qualifying for the knockout phase, even Morocco, the first African team in the semi-final, mabrouk! Felicitades Argentina, of course, for winning this (FIFA) World Cup. Congratulations to France too, for being that close to winning the trophy. We had excellent stadiums, perfect infrastructure, no incidents, zero incidents. Some were telling me that maybe it's linked with the fact that people weren't drinking alcohol in or around the stadiums, maybe, maybe not, but it was very peaceful and joyful. And, of course, we took on board as well our responsibility to deal with human rights matters and to deal with the legacy of this (FIFA) World Cup - the first in the Middle East - Shukran Qatar.

Secondly, we have promised you that we would organise the best, the most beautiful FIFA Women's World Cup. And we did so in 2019, in France. We created, we organised, we hosted a beautiful (FIFA) Women's World Cup: 1.2 billion viewers around the world; more than a million of fans in the stadiums – a magical atmosphere in France. This environment has led to an impressive progress in globalising women's football. And, therefore, thank you to France (and) congratulations to the US as they won the trophy. It was once again the best, of course.

We also promised you all that we would strengthen FIFA that we would strengthen... FIFA is a stable organisation, (it is) very strong – because you never know what could happen. And, when things happen, we need to be strong, and we need to be prepared. And, something, indeed, happened, something very serious: the world stopped because of COVID. As a result of a solid and strong situation in FIFA, we managed to establish the (FIFA) COVID Relief Plan, a support plan of USD 1.5 billion. This FIFA COVID Relief Plan supported so many of you out for... It supported you to keep football alive: fans, youth football, women's football. Not professional football. But football that we all experience – all of us. And that's thanks to the work that we have all carried out together.

And I promise you as well, that we are going to increase our revenues, and make FIFA more stable and more transparent; therefore, regaining the trust of sponsors and broadcasters. To be honest I was not so sure whether we would achieve that, because we set an ambitious target at USD 6.4 billion. But we did perform. Our revenues have gone up to a record USD 7.5 billion. More than USD 1 billion more than what was budgeted in a period which was set by COVID. You cannot do this if you are not strong if you are not a strong and solid organisation which is trusted by everyone.

And I would like to remind you as well that when I arrived in FIFA, the FIFA reserves were around USD 1 billion. Today, the FIFA reserves are at almost USD 4 billion, which means we have even more money that we can inject and invest in football, because FIFA's money is your money. It's for football and football development. And you know, I promised you that we would increase all the programmes, that we would have more development programmes in the world.

And that's what we did. Many of you may remember that before being elected as FIFA President, each federation would receive USD 250,000 per year. Now, they receive USD 2 million per year. So it's seven times more in seven years. We multiplied the investment by seven. If a CEO were to tell stakeholders that the products were multiplied by seven, I believe that they would keep that CEO forever. They would love for this story to carry on, but I'm only here for a four-year cycle.

But dear friends, it is important that the governance of FIFA works. That is why we promised you that we will reinforce FIFA's governance. Every single dollar that is being invested in the projects and the associations, will undergo an independent audit. Money doesn't just get lost anymore, and that is why we are so optimistic and positive. That is also why the institutions, and not only the sponsors and the broadcasters, have regained their trust in FIFA. The Department of Justice, for example, of the United States, has given us more than USD 200 million back in the last year, that was stolen by corrupt officials of FIFA. But now they have given it back to us and we were able to reinvest it into football. Concacaf and CONMEBOL, for example. If institutions, especially the American institutions, didn't trust us, they wouldn't do that.

And we have also been trusted by political institutions. I have been invited for the second time to the G20 Summit to give a speech about the importance of the sport. We now have different corporations,

for example, with the World Health Organisation, UN Women... different organisations and they count on FIFA in order to realise something, and we are very proud of that. And we keep saying that we are so proud; these people, they wouldn't sit in the same room as FIFA if they didn't trust FIFA – but they trust us. They see the results, what we are doing, and they know that they can count on us.

We also promised that we would review the transfer system – how do you say it in Spanish? Transfer, yes? Is it the same thing? Transfer? Well, basically, (the FIFA) Transfer Matching System. We said that we would review it. Why? Because every time that a police force checks a transfer or the signing of a player, they used to find something and (say) “this isn't right, the payment was made to this or that account”. We knew that we had to solve that, and we did so. How did we do it? With the creation of the FIFA Clearing House, a clearing house that in the first instance will make sure that all the solidarity payment(s) for youth and young players will go to the training clubs because when USD 7 billion are spent in a single year in transfers, and USD 700 million are paid in agent fees, only USD 70 million are invested in the development of youth football. This is just not acceptable and that is why we decided to act, and this is only the first step.

Obviously, we also established and implemented new agent regulations – far more transparent and clearer. We have standardised the rules for player loans, and we have come up with rules and we will keep working on rules for women's football. In the past, we had nothing; for instance, on maternity leave, pregnancy... What happens then? So, we are now working on this, and we will not stop here.

I promised you that we would revise the international match calendar – the IMC – which is the most important tools for all of you, for all of us, and it is all about coordinating the national team matches and club matches. It is about releasing players for the national teams. It's about travelling, it's about going to the final tournaments, for the confederations going to the (FIFA) World Cup, and two days ago in Kigali, we reached an agreement for this new International Match Calendar until 2030. We will have more visibility, more clarity for a couple of years. So, we may now work on this and be more inclusive than we'll ever be. I am now looking at the FIFA President, David Aganzo, and I thank him. We must protect the welfare and well-being of the players. Therefore, we created a task force to study how, for each of these cases, we would protect their welfare so they would have a certain block period for holidays, that they would rest after the matches. And we want everything to go smoothly for everyone.

And, of course – I have to go back to English, because this is a typical English part – we have continued, and we are continuing, to evolve the laws of the game together with IFAB. We have been introducing VAR [i.e. video assistant referees] now in over 100 countries around the world. We will be introducing VAR “light” to allow those who have less means to have VAR, but you still need around four cameras to be able to do that. And we are working on a last level, so to say, or a first level, if you want, depending where you take the ranking – or if I take a similarity with one of our sponsors, who has “light”, they also have “zero”, so we can call it VAR “zero” or VAR Video Support – for those who don't have four cameras but fewer, at least one camera, to have a small video help for the referee. We tested it in the (FIFA) Futsal World Cup, and it works. It works. And we will continue to test it to really give everyone in the 211 associations the possibility to have some technological help for the referee because it is very, very difficult to be a referee at every level, of course.

We are also testing, because we always want to be striving for attacking football, so we are testing a new offside rule to give a bit more advantage to the attacker. But these are tests, and we will see what

they will bring. We are, in any case, always open to test whatever we can, whatever we think makes football more attractive for the fans who are watching it on TV.

We have, also, when we talk about our social responsibility, improved our social responsibility. We promised to do so, and we did that, and we did so many other things. We created the (FIFA) Foundation led by the former President of Argentina, Mauricio Macri. Thank you very much for that. And the foundation acts in so many parts of the world. We have created a Football for Schools programme, where students everywhere in the world can not only play football, but they also learn how to live their lives through the rules of the game. We also work to protect minors with the FIFA Guardians Programme. We work with the UN Odyssey (Project) against the manipulation of the game. We work to protect the climate, with COP [i.e. Conference of the Parties] in Glasgow. And we also work to protect human rights everywhere in the world, but we will talk about this specifically later on.

But in the end, what we promised you is to keep on working, to work a lot with honesty, to work in order to protect football, to protect the member associations, to protect our fans from all over the world. Why? Because we always need to remember our people, especially (at) our formal Congresses, such as this one. We always need to remember that football is a synonym of joy, happiness, peace. Football is a synonym of unity, and football unites the world. So, this is what we have achieved in the last four years.

Now, so that you cannot tell me that you didn't know what would come up, I will tell you what will come up in the next four years. My promises, our promises for the next four years, because there is a lot to look forward to, mainly, of course, the areas of competition and development, because we are here to organise competitions and to develop football, not to do other things. Organise competitions and develop football, mainly, without forgetting the rest.

So, when it comes to competitions, well, the first point is we will, of course, deliver the greatest FIFA Women's World Cup ever in 2023, and we will be boosting women's football tremendously. Not only because we move from 24 to 32 teams, but for many other reasons, and I will also come back to this a little bit later.

Besides that, and this is again for all of you and the fans, we will, of course, organise the greatest FIFA men's World Cup ever in 2026, also because we move from 32 to 48 teams, and from 64 to 104 matches, but (also) because this will be the most inclusive (FIFA) World Cup ever, and we want to be, and we have to be inclusive. And of course you, the Congress, will have the right and the duty to decide on the hosts of future men's and women's World Cups in the coming year. So, it's a big responsibility for FIFA, for you, for the world.

We (have) also decided to create a new (FIFA) Club World Cup. This new (FIFA) Club World Cup will be played every four years from 2025 onwards. We will have the best 32 teams in the world. They will compete to decide who will be crowned the best club in the world. Indeed, we need more and not less competitions at worldwide level. We want football to evolve, develop worldwide.

And we are discussing similar ideas for women's clubs, about organising a Women's Club World Cup. We will discuss the format, but we should implement a Women's Club World Cup. In addition, each year, we will organise a small tournament with all the winners of the confederation tournaments. The winner of the tournament will face the European winner in a stadium somewhere in the world.

We will, when it comes to international team football, also create occasions for teams from different confederations to play each other, which is something that is quite difficult and complex these days. We discussed the creation of what we call the FIFA World Series, in March every second year, in even years, before the (FIFA) World Cup and before the Copa America, European Championship. When teams are free for friendly games, we will organise this FIFA World Series for those teams who want it – four teams from four different confederations who can join and play together and encounter each other, to create communities from all over the world. And as FIFA, we have a duty, as well, to assist and help all those who ask us for it.

So, we are, of course, working with some confederations, with some regional associations, to discuss potential and how we can help them to create new club competitions, national team competitions, at regional, at local level, because when I hear that there is too much football, well maybe yes, but certainly not everywhere. Actually, in the majority of the world, there is not enough football, not enough quality football. And when you see the passion that exists for football, then you have to do something. We organised, last year, the FIFA Arab Cup as a test event for the (FIFA) World Cup. It was an incredible, incredible success for the Arab world. 450 million people, 23 countries – great success. It doesn't touch the top or the elite of football, but it has a great, great impact. Only this year, I was in Iraq, where I witnessed the opening game of the (Arab) Gulf Cup. An incredible passion in Iraq, an incredible event. I then went to Thailand as well, where I witnessed the final of the South-East Asian Cup [i.e. ASEAN Football Federation (AFF) Championship final] between Thailand and Vietnam. A great celebration of football. And it's our duty and our obligation to support these kinds of events.

Let's talk about youth football. We'll have to make amends for the new cycle. Indeed, the (FIFA) U-17 World Cup will now be played from 2025 each year, for boys and girls, so that we won't lose a generation. Each generation will be entitled to compete in a (FIFA) U-17 World Cup. We'll have way more teams than ever in this new (FIFA) World Cup. In terms of the (FIFA) U-20 World Cup, we will increase the number of participating teams for the women's edition. And we may organise a football festival for the younger ones, below 15 years of age.

And, of course, we will also improve our regulations and the FIFA Statutes. The good governance principles which have brought us this far, we will protect them, and we will continue to involve them. We will continue to look at the transfer system to make sure that everything works well during the transfers. And that is why we will maybe have a discussion in order to improve the transparency of transfer fees and salaries. It might be necessary to introduce a cap, and we have to think about how we can calculate these caps. Everything is possible today, and we will have to look at it with all the other stakeholders, and we will see what we can do.

We will also, and it is obviously very clear when we talk about transparency and development, we will continue in the development of football. USD 2.5 billion dollars will be invested in the next four years, they will go specifically into the development of football. And it will be controlled, as well. We want to promote football development, and we have a very interesting project that Arsène (Wenger) will present later on. This project is the Talent Development Scheme, the TDS. This is a scheme for every talent, all around the world, to give them a chance and to become a great player. It is not impossible. We just need organisation, work, and that's what we are here for.

We are here to help you all. And, of course, the same goes for referee development. And here, we count on Pierluigi Collina, who will talk about all these aspects. But what we can tell you is that we will invest in Team One - the referee's team. And you friends have seen it in the annual report, in the financial report, you will hear it after as well when we present the new cycle.

We are promising you new record revenues for the next four-year cycle of USD 11 billion. So from USD 6.4 (billion), which became USD 7.5 (billion) in the last cycle, we go to USD 11 billion. And actually the new (FIFA) Club World Cup is even not included in that, so I think this figure will increase still, by at least a couple of billions. We will see. I count on our teams to make that happen, they know that they can count on me as well to make it happen, because it is finally for all of you.

And obviously, we need to care about the fans and the new generations, and their engagement; and the promise I make here is that we will continue, of course, to organise the best competitions ever, everywhere in the world. Everywhere in the world. When we organise a small tournament here in Rwanda, it has to be the best tournament, so that everyone can enjoy. We will develop as well our platform, FIFA+. FIFA+ is becoming and will become also a source of revenue for many associations, who will have their games broadcasted all over the world, thanks to FIFA. We democratise football, from every country, to every country. And this is a commitment that we can give you. And also, for the young generation as well, and those who still believe that they are young, like all of us, eFootball. eFootball is part of football, it's part of the future, and be sure of one thing: the new FIFA, not the new FIFA institution, but the new FIFA game, the FIFA 25, 26, 27, 28 and so on, will always be the best eGame, and the best experience for any young girl and young boy who loves this gaming. So we are working on that, and you will have news on this very, very soon.

And finally, let me, and for those who counted, it's eleven points, so as it was eleven for the achievements, there are many more, but, we leave the substitutes for the additional time when Pierluigi (Collina) tells us how many minutes we have left. The eleventh point is obviously also, the corporate social responsibility element of our job. We are a football organisation, we are not The Red Cross or Greenpeace, or any other organisation, who are doing great work. We are a football organisation: we have to organise competitions, we have to develop football, but we have a responsibility as well. We have a responsibility to help tackle global challenges, and we will continue to do that. Whether we speak about climate, whether we speak about human rights, whether we speak about diseases or disabilities, about anything. We'll play our part in the team, in respect of the fact that we are 211 countries, representing the entire world.

So again, in conclusion, and after thanking you for listening to me, and apologising with the interpreters for the many switches, I would simply like to assure you of my continued commitment with you, as part of your team, and to simply ask you to remember that football is joy, happiness, passion, love and peace. And that football is here to unite our beautiful world. Thank you very much.

3: Closing remarks

What a beautiful video showing us what this year is actually about for us. This year for FIFA is the year of women. It's a women's (year). As a father of four daughters, four beautiful daughters I should add, I know very well how much attention we need to give to women in our lives. FIFA is no different in that. We would all like the (FIFA) Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand to be a celebration.

A celebration of football, a celebration of women's football, a celebration of progress, a celebration of equality. A feast for everyone. It will not be tarnished by any other topic. Today, embarking on a historic journey for women's football and for equality. This will lead us on a path to equal pay. This journey has three steps. Step one and step two have already been taken by the FIFA Council.

Step one being equal conditions and services for all men and women playing at a FIFA World Cup. This will be a reality for the (FIFA) Women's World Cup 2023, the same conditions as 2022 will be for the players and coaching staff for the (FIFA) Women's World Cup 2023.

Step two entails a significant increase in the total prize money envelope for the 2023 (FIFA Women's) World Cup. It will be over three times more than in 2019 when I was already President. It will be 10 times more than in 2015, before I became President of FIFA. 10 times more. So, we move from (USD) 15 million in 2015 to (USD) 150 million in 2023. For the first time ever, we will try to dedicate a specific portion of this payment - which mainly has to go to football development, but a specific portion of that should go, of course, to the players.

Now comes step three: the most difficult step, the most complicated step, the step that will take a longer time. This is backed by our new commercial strategy with the implementation of a dedicated marketing concept for the women's game and the (FIFA) Women's World Cup in particular. Our ambition would be, of course, to be able to have equality in payments for the 2026 men's and the 2027 women's World Cups. This is the objective that we set for ourselves. FIFA is stepping up with actions, not just with words as you have seen, thanks to the decisions of the Council, with the increase, in 2023, of the prize money. Not just words, but action. FIFA is stepping up, but unfortunately this is not the case for everyone across the industry. Broadcasters and sponsors, dear friends, have to do more in this respect, for FIFA, for the confederations, for the member associations, for everyone, because it is easy to criticise but a bit more difficult to act. FIFA is receiving between 10 and 100 times inferior offers for the Women's World Cup than for the Men's World Cup. So if a broadcaster, often public broadcasters in big countries, offers us 100 million or more to broadcast the men's World Cup, they offer us one million or less to broadcast the women's World Cup. Do you think this is normal? At the same time, these same public broadcasters, paid by the taxpayers' money, criticise FIFA - a bit less the others - for not guaranteeing equal pay to men and women. Well, if you pay us 100 times less whereby your viewing figures are very similar, maybe 20-25% less for the women than for the men, not 100 times less, 20% less. Offer us 20% less, offer us 50% less, but not 100% less because how can we do it otherwise? That's why we all need to be on the same side in this fight for equality, for real equality. FIFA will do its part. We've started already. We want the others to do the same. The news I have for those broadcasters or sponsors who don't want to offer similar amounts than for the men's World Cup is simply that we're not going to sell women's football and a women's World Cup at these prices. Women deserve much more than that. We're here to fight for them and with them. We need to fight together to achieve that because the strategy that we have, and our ambitious plan can mean that in 2026 and 2027 we have equal payments for men and women whereby all the member associations' revenues are also protected and that each association that participates in the men's or the women's World Cup will receive more than what they receive now. We're confident that we can achieve that.

We're confident that we have the players, the men and the women, by guaranteeing them clear conditions. We're confident that we can help the member associations, the participating member associations by guaranteeing them more revenue than today, be it for the men's or for the women's World Cup.

We're starting this journey now. My commitment there is to continue working very hard with my four daughters, and with all the women and men inside and outside of this room, because we defend exactly the same principles.

Thank you very much, this was my closing speech. I'll go back there with another video.

ENDS