

72nd Ordinary CONMEBOL Congress, 2 April 2020 by video conference

FIFA President address

Dear President of CONMEBOL, dear Alejandro,
Dear vice-presidents of FIFA and presidents of the confederations present,
Dear Presidents,
Dear friends, everyone,

It's a pleasure to be with you, but it's also very sad to meet by video conference. These are difficult times. Times of not a lot of words. These are times to show respect to all those who are suffering and helping.

This virus is showing us how small and vulnerable we are. This is a global world in which exceptional problems require exceptional solutions. We will work together on this

Football is not the most important thing, health comes first and should remain our priority until this sickness has been defeated.

The world is facing new challenges and we have to stay together and work as a team. This is the lesson that football can give: to work as a team.

FIFA has already taken a few decisions. We have postponed the World Cup qualifiers in South America and Asia and have joined forces with the World Health Organization to help.

We also have to look ahead and can't remain passive thinking that the world will be the same. This will affect us. Both our world and our sport will be different once we return to normality. It's our responsibility as football administrators, first of all to ensure football can survive and secondly move forward once again. This is not only our responsibility but also our obligation. At FIFA, and I repeat it once again, we put health first.

With this in mind, we are working on three aspects: the international match calendar, the legal framework and the needed financial support.

On the international match calendar, we have to look for global solutions to tackle these global problems in a spirit of cooperation and solidarity. Everyone has different interests, but we must talk and put on the table topics that we perhaps didn't discuss in the past. I'm convinced that we will find solutions for the international match calendar.

On the legal framework, how can we provide help on contractual matters? We have a (task force) which is already working and will be making proposals very soon in order to protect the clubs and players.

On financial support, I would like to thank the Bureau of the Council. Thanks to the work of the past four years, FIFA is now in a solid financial position. FIFA stands for credibility, something that we couldn't say some years ago. This is the new FIFA that we have created that works for the benefit of football and faces the problems. This is why we are now working to see how we can help. We will assess the damages, we will talk about this topic in another working group with the confederations and we'll consult all relevant stakeholders, and we'll answer by supporting football.

This is the FIFA we all want. A strong and precious FIFA that makes everyone proud, because everyone is FIFA.

Lastly, I want to reinforce my initial idea: health comes first. Tomorrow we all would like to see football again, but we don't know when we will be able to resume playing and no one around the world knows when we will be able to play like before. It's very important that football follows the instructions of the health authorities and governments, and it's very important that football gives a good example, because it's clear that no match is more important than a human life. This we need to clearly have in our minds, while at the same time, as already said, working with confidence and thinking positive towards the future.

Dear friends, dear President, really thanks for this opportunity. I wish you a great Congress in these difficult circumstances. All the best to all of you and your families. Give priority to health. Stay healthy. I hope to see you soon in South America to give you a real and not a virtual hug.