

**By email**

Members of the European Parliament –  
signatories to the letter dated 30 June 2017

Zurich, 13 July 2017  
P/fan/ats

**Re: Your letter regarding combatting sexism and gender-based violence in football**

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

I would like to thank you for your letter, which was well received and read by the FIFA President and was then forwarded to me as head of the administration for the appropriate follow up.

From my side I would also like to thank you for sharing your concern on this important social issue. FIFA has a zero-tolerance stance towards discrimination and violence of any kind and I am grateful to you for giving us the opportunity to share with you some information on the policy framework and specific measures that we have put in place to intensify our efforts to tackle this problem in football.

I think you will agree with us that these are efforts, initiatives and processes that are to be understood as ongoing exercises. They aim at ensuring that an organisation has in place the appropriate systems but also the means to respond adequately to incidents, situations or behaviour that deviate from the rules and expected code of conduct.

Allow me to start with FIFA's new Statutes approved on 26 February 2016. In article 3 FIFA enshrined its commitment to respecting all internationally recognised human rights. Also article 4 clearly prohibits discrimination of any kind, including on account of gender or sexual orientation.

In support of its strategic approach, FIFA has been taking concrete steps in the areas of diversity and anti-discrimination, which are both raised specifically in your letter. And I am pleased to say that in many of these initiatives we are collaborating with experts, with NGOs, international organisations and the civil society. Because such efforts need alliances in order to succeed. Alone, no organisation – no matter how influential – can move forward. Issues like discrimination need joint approaches. Approaches that aim at changing cultures, eliminating stereotypes and creating a new mind set.

FIFA has asked the international human rights expert and author of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, Harvard Kennedy School Professor John Ruggie, to assist and



provide advice for further integrating human rights aspects into FIFA's policies and practices. Based also on his independent report, published in April 2016, FIFA has developed and published a human rights policy in accordance with principle 16 of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and international best practice. As you may know, we have also established an independent Human Rights Advisory Board composed of renowned external experts to provide FIFA with independent advice on its efforts to implement article 3 of the Statutes.

Further to the above, concrete measures have been progressively implemented aiming at tackling discrimination, respectively striving to ensure a discrimination-free environment at our events. FIFA's Anti-Discrimination Monitoring System is an innovation in the sports world. It was launched during the FIFA World Cup Russia™ qualification stages and it is carried out in collaboration with the Fare network, an NGO working to combat racism and all other forms of discrimination in football, including gender-based. The System includes independent observers who are present in the stadiums and submit reports about discriminatory incidents. These reports serve as a basis for opening disciplinary procedures and potential sanctions of member associations.

The recent Confederations Cup in Russia was the first time in an official tournament that FIFA had a three-step procedure in place in the event of discriminatory incidents and deployed anti-discrimination observers at all matches. These observers were also trained to identify incidents involving sexism and gender-based violence. With the three-step procedure – which was approved by the FIFA Council in May 2017 – referees have the authority to first stop the match and request a public announcement to insist that the discriminatory behaviour cease, to then suspend the match until it stops, and finally, if the behaviour still persists, to decide to abandon the match. It was with satisfaction that I saw all of these measures and tools being tested at the Confederations Cup. The fact that according to the most recent reports from Fare, no discriminatory incidents occurred during the last two matches of the competition and that, to a large extent, the majority of the matches took place in a similar environment, is an encouraging sign to continue in this direction.

Besides the reinforcement of controls and sanctions, awareness-raising and education is another key pillar of the strategy that FIFA has put in place. I would like to mention some of the activities again related to the most recent football event, the Confederations Cup in Russia. In-person training sessions took place with FIFA and Local Organising Committee (LOC) staff, referees, general coordinators, match commissioners, security officers, etc. ahead of the tournament. Additional awareness raising and prevention tools were implemented including video displays in the stadiums featuring football legends conveying an anti-discrimination message, whilst at the semi-finals (Kazan on 28 June and Sochi on 29 June), the FIFA Anti-Discrimination Days were celebrated with a special pre-match protocol. This is an annual event that has been part of the FIFA calendar since 2001.

Also in 2016, we introduced the annual FIFA Diversity Award to highlight the efforts of organisations, groups or individuals that are standing up for diversity in football and inspiring unity, solidarity and equality among all people. In addition, FIFA has been supporting all of its member associations in that respect by publishing and distributing the FIFA Good Practice Guide on Diversity and Anti-Discrimination, already since 2015.



FIFA has also been stepping up its efforts to empower female leaders, increasing the number of female members of the FIFA Council and creating more opportunities for women to progress in senior managerial positions within the governance of the game in order to contribute to a more balanced, inclusive and respectful environment. Stronger participation of women in football has become one of the overarching goals that permeate everything we do. For the first time ever, FIFA has a dedicated Women's Football Division, entrusted with the task of executing a strategy to bring the women's game into the mainstream. To that end, one of the main objectives of "FIFA 2.0: The Vision for the Future" concerns the growth of women's football: by 2026, we intend to double, to 60 million, the number of female players around the world. An ambitious pledge – but it is no more than the cause deserves.

FIFA is aware of the risk that, through the organisation of its tournaments, it may become involved in adverse human rights impacts in relation to anti-discrimination and gender violence. At the same time, we are aware that such events present a unique opportunity to raise awareness and have positive social messages heard around the world. Both the FIFA President and I have, on several occasions, publicly and firmly denounced all cases of discrimination. But as I mentioned at the beginning of my letter the effort is ongoing and it requires collaboration and the involvement of all parties. It also requires targeted education initiatives, awareness-raising and capacity-building, which will enhance and reinforce a culture of diversity and mutual understanding within the entire football pyramid.

The European Union has been playing an important role in promoting and supporting positive societal values. We welcome your contribution, as representatives of the people of Europe, to this joint effort and we remain open to a continuous dialogue for promoting societal topics in which sport and football have the potential to contribute.

Yours sincerely,

FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE  
DE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



Fatma Samoura  
Secretary General



com