



Per E-Mail
Members of the European Parliament
Signatories of the letter dated 6 December 2024

Zurich, 9 January 2025

Subject: response to your letter dated 6 December 2024

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

Thank you for your letter to the FIFA President and for sharing your perspectives on the selection process and human rights considerations for the 2030 and 2034 FIFA World Cups. I am pleased to respond on behalf of FIFA in my capacity as Secretary General, overseeing our work in the areas mentioned in your letter.

At FIFA, our main objective as the governing body of global football is to foster the development of the sport across every corner of the world and make football truly global.

In line with this, the 37-member FIFA Council, comprising representatives from all six regional confederations, agreed in October 2023 that the only bid for the 2030 FIFA World Cup would be the joint bid by Morocco, Portugal and Spain with three centenary celebration matches to be held in Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. It was also agreed that, in accordance with the principle of confederation rotation and to ensure the best possible conditions for hosting the tournaments, the bidding processes for the 2030 and 2034 editions would run concurrently. FIFA member associations from the Asian Football Confederation and the Oceania Football Confederation were invited to bid for the FIFA World Cup 2034™, and Saudi Arabia was ultimately the only candidate for the 2034 edition.

Subsequently, thorough and well-founded processes have been followed using the successful FIFA World Cup 2026 bidding process as a foundation. All aspects of the bidding processes were conducted in accordance with the key principles of objectivity, transparency and integrity, whereby the main documents and guidelines related to the process were made publicly available online. All the stakeholders involved were subject to the FIFA Code of Ethics and an independent external auditor has been appointed to monitor the bidding processes. For details on these processes, we would encourage you to read the detailed bid evaluation reports for 2030 and 2034 editions of the FIFA World Cup™ published on fifa.com.



Focusing on human rights, which is the main topic of your letter, I would like to reiterate that FIFA is fully committed to respecting internationally recognised human rights in accordance with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

There are two important observations which inform FIFA's work in this context. First, as highlighted in the recommendations of the April 2016 report of Professor John G. Ruggie – one of the leading experts on the topic of human rights, a former UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Business and Human Rights, and the architect of the UN Guiding Principles of Business and Human Rights – inclusion of human rights within the criteria of evaluating bids “is about making decisions based on evidence of how effectively bidders intend to address human rights risks connected with a tournament. It is not about peremptorily excluding countries based on their general human rights context”.

Secondly, the FIFA Overview of Hosting Requirements also emphasises that “FIFA will take into consideration not only a bid's adherence to core requirements but also its commitment to drive positive environmental and social change over the medium-to long-term horizon, with an understanding that all aspects cannot be applied or examined in a standardised manner but also depend on the prevailing context of the host country/host countries.”

In line with the above, FIFA has integrated certain human rights processes and requirements into the bidding and hosting documents since 2017. FIFA requires bidders for the FIFA World Cup to submit a number of assessments, commitments and strategies in relation to human rights. These include requirements for the relevant actors, such as governments, host cities, stadiums and training venues to abide by their respective obligations under international human rights standards. FIFA then publishes the bid books as well as other supporting documents such as the human rights strategies on fifa.com.

In the case of the combined bid of Morocco, Portugal and Spain, as underlined in the FIFA World Cup 2030™ bid evaluation report available on fifa.com, the bid members demonstrated a good understanding of the human rights-related requirements and provided a good basis for further developing effective systems to address the potential human rights impacts associated with the tournament across the three countries. The documents provided by the bid members outlined a solid basis for measures to address human rights impacts, primarily in relation to labour, freedom of expression, diversity and anti-discrimination, and safeguarding, with government support for such measures and programmes.

With respect to the bid for the FIFA World Cup 2034 by the Saudi Arabian Football Federation, the human rights-related documentation submitted included, amongst other things, the following elements:

- On labour rights, the bidder has committed to ensuring equitable wages and decent working and living conditions for all individuals involved in the preparation and delivery of the FIFA World Cup, including through the establishment of a workers' welfare system to monitor compliance with labour rights standards for tournament-related workers.
- The host government has committed to engaging with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in relation to its commitment to upholding international labour standards in all activities associated with the competition. The bidder also confirmed that there is an existing cooperation programme with the ILO with a view to further cooperation.
- On diversity and anti-discrimination, the bidder has committed to ensuring a secure and inclusive tournament environment free from discrimination, through the implementation of policies, procedures and educational measures to address discrimination in the tournament context. The bidder has also committed to reviewing and potentially amending relevant legislation as part of the government's commitments under international standards.
- On safety and security, there is commitment by the bidder ensuring the safety of all participants and attendees, whilst abiding by international security standards. This comprises a commitment to ensuring that the country's penal code and respective criminal procedures relating to detention and fair trial align with best practice and international standards.
- On freedom of expression, the host authorities have committed to ensuring freedom of expression, including press freedom, in all activities associated with the tournament. It has also committed to verifying that the policies and practices of the tournament hosts enable both the proper operation of local and international media and the implementation of possible required enhancements.

With the bidding processes now completed, FIFA is working collaboratively with its local counterparts with the aim to ensure these commitments are upheld. In addition, the FIFA World Cup will shine a spotlight on Saudi Arabia for the coming years which can provide an opportunity for actors within the country and beyond to promote positive change. In that respect, FIFA also counts on the support of the international community to use the power of football to promote positive social change worldwide, in line also with the policies and practices of the European Union, which you represent as Members of the European Parliament. The European Union has already demonstrated its commitment to



strengthening economic, political and cultural ties with Saudi Arabia. Bilateral trade in goods reached €75 billion in 2023, EU investment in Saudi Arabia increased by 50% between 2020 and 2022 (from €19.9 billion to €30 billion), and major milestones, such as the strategic partnership between the EU and Saudi Arabia on energy and technology currently under discussion, and the opening of the first European Chamber of Commerce in Saudi Arabia in May this year, underline the EU's commitment to the region.

Similarly, FIFA and the global football community are looking to support the sporting potential of this region. We remain steadfast in our mission to develop football and make it accessible to people worldwide, while upholding internationally recognized human rights and collaborating with our political partners to achieve shared objectives.

Wishing you a great start in the new year and looking forward to further strengthening our constructive engagement with the European Union institutions.

Sincerely,

FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE
DE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mattias Grafström', is written over the printed name.

Mattias Grafström
FIFA Secretary General