

FIFA President Blatter's address at Congress Opening Ceremony

(abridged)

"These are unprecedented and difficult times for FIFA. The events of yesterday have cast a long shadow over football and over this week's Congress.

The actions of these individuals, if proven, bring shame and humiliation on football and demand action and change from us all.

We cannot allow the reputation of football and FIFA to be dragged through the mud any longer. It has to stop here.

I know many people hold me ultimately responsible for the actions and reputation of the global football community – whether it is a decision for the hosting of the World Cup or a corruption scandal.

We cannot monitor everyone all of the time. If people want to do wrong, they will also try to hide it.

But it must fall to me to bear the responsibility for the reputation and well-being of our organisation and to find a way forward to fix things. I will not allow the actions of a few to destroy the hard work and integrity of the vast majority of those who work so hard for football.

I must stress that those who are corrupt in football are in a tiny minority, like in society.

But, like society, they must be caught and held responsible for their actions.

Football cannot be the exception to the rule.

That is our responsibility at FIFA, and we will co-operate with authorities to make sure anyone involved in wrongdoing – from top to bottom – is discovered and punished.

There can be no place for corruption of any kind.

The next few months will not be easy, more bad news may follow, but it is necessary to begin to restore trust in our organisation.

Let this be the turning point.

More needs to be done to make sure everyone in football behaves responsibly and ethically – everywhere.

Football, the fans, the players, the clubs, the world – deserve so much more and we must respond.

Tomorrow, we have the opportunity to begin on what will be a long and difficult road to rebuilding trust.

We have lost that trust and we must now earn it back.

We must earn it back through the decisions we make, through the expectations we place on each other and through the way we behave.

(...and) I ask you also to reflect on why the vast majority are in football.

Not for greed, not to exploit, not for power... but because of a love for the game, to serve others and to try to achieve positive change through responsible leadership.”