

## FIFA President, Gianni Infantino, at G20 summit

*1 December 2018, Buenos Aires – Argentina*

### Keynote speech at the G20 Leaders' plenary session

#### Title: The power of football

#### Speech transcript

Images say more than words: emotion, passion, pride, happiness, life: this is football!

Presidente Macri, Heads of Government, Distinguished Guests, Dear Friends,

On behalf of more than 300 million football players and the billion football fans worldwide,  
On behalf of FIFA, a new FIFA that has embraced reforms to uphold ethics, integrity, transparency and accountability so that we can again focus on football,  
On behalf of the entire football community, it is a great honor to speak with you today.

To President Macri and the people of Argentina, thank you for this invitation and for your great hospitality. Muchisimas gracias! I must point out that before President Macri became a successful President of Argentina, he was an even more successful President of one of Argentina's most popular football clubs: Boca Juniors.

Actually, I know that you are all football fans here. I have seen some of you cheering when your country is playing. You feel proud, rightly, as do all the people in your country when you win. As President of FIFA, I must of course stay neutral but I do want to once again commend President Putin and the Russian people for hosting the best FIFA World Cup ever: **большое спасибо!** Of course also congratulations to Président Macron and the French national team on your World Cup victory! *Félicitations aux Champions du Monde!*

I believe this is the first time that the head of FIFA is addressing the G20. I suspect that some may find it unusual. Dear Leaders, I am here today to speak to you as a simple citizen of the World. A citizen that loves a game that is loved by billions worldwide. Now, your main responsibility, as the Leaders of the World, is to care about us, about your people.

So I am here today to convey to you a message and offer you a tool: the message is one of hope, the tool is football. Because football is more than a game. Football is a force for good that unites the World. Football is a unique tool, which has the potential to help you address some of the challenges we are facing in our modern society. Football is played everywhere and by everyone: irrespective of climate, age, gender, religious or ethnic background, or even disabilities. Football is teaching us positive values: fair play, respect, inclusion, trust, teamwork, responsibility and so on. Football breaks down barriers and brings countries and cultures together:

- As when Japan and the Republic of Korea co-hosted the World Cup in 2002;
- When a united Germany hosted "the World amongst friends" in 2006;
- When South Africa united a continent in pride to host the first African World Cup in 2010;
- When the world experienced how Brazil truly loves and lives football in 2014
- When we all discovered a new country: Russia, in 2018.
- And when Canada, Mexico and the United States will host the World Cup together in 2026.

**Fédération Internationale de Football Association**

President Trump, Presidente Peña Nieto and Prime Minister Trudeau, your United Bid was a reminder of the common bonds that bind us together. Maybe, if football makes dreams come true, in 2022 we could also experience a World Cup in Qatar as well as, why not, some games in other countries of the Arabian Gulf. But this is another story, hopefully with a happy end. Inshallah!

Dear Leaders, I have come here because I know that you are working on building consensus for fair and sustainable development that promotes inclusion. In this important work, football can be your partner. Why? For at least five reasons:

Firstly, because football means economic growth. Over the past decade, the football industry has grown twice as fast as the global economy in a time of economic crisis! With gross output of 200 billion USD and gross value added of 130 billion USD, the football economy is equivalent to a medium-large country. Perhaps one day we might also join the G20! Today, 70% of the global football economy is generated in Europe. So just imagine the incredible potential worldwide, if we take the right decisions. Coming back to one of the priorities of the G20, infrastructure development, we are also giving our small contribution. With the revenues from the World Cup, FIFA is able to invest nearly 600 million USD every year in new pitches and football facilities all around the world, including in many developing countries. For the benefit of our youth!

Yes, Football means economic growth and contributes to infrastructure development.

Secondly, because football means education. Academic research shows that when football is part of the school curriculum, absenteeism goes down and student engagement goes up. Under President Xi, football is playing a key role in the development of education in China. Similar activities have been created in India, Indonesia and Turkey. These initiatives have inspired us in launching, next year, the "Football for Schools" project. We are investing 100 million USD, offering an online digital platform for schools and distributing 11 million balls to as many schools as possible around the globe, reaching more than 700 million children. This project is about life skills, not football skills. Life skills and true values taught to our children using the power of football - in the classrooms. We will launch this project in February with President Kagame and the African Union and will invite all of your governments to join us.

Yes, Football means also education.

Thirdly, because football means health. We know that lack of physical activity is one of the most serious public health issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. When children play football at a young age, they are more likely to stay active later. The more we get up and run and kick a ball, the less likely we may be to develop obesity, diabetes, depression or cardiovascular diseases. This is why the European Union and Australia have launched innovative programs to promote health through football. Around the world, people often say that football is their life. It turns out that playing football might also help save your life! We are proud to partner with the WHO in football for health projects.

Yes, football means also health.

Fourthly, because football means gender equality and empowerment for women and girls. Football has too often overlooked half the world's population: the women. At the new FIFA we are determined to change this. Actually, I have to declare a special interest here, since, as the father of four daughters myself, I cannot go back home if I don't mention this. Yes, there is progress around the world,

also through football. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia opened its stadiums to women. In India and in several African countries, football clinics that also address violence against women have led to dramatic improvements in attitudes towards women and girls. The FIFA Women's World Cup in France next year will also be used to strengthen this message. I am sure President Macron joins me in inviting you all to France next summer for the celebration of women's football.

Yes, football means also gender equality.

Finally and to return to where I began, because football can bring us together, especially in difficult times. In our interconnected world, we see more migration and immigration than ever before. For so many migrants, refugees and immigrants it can be hard, at first, to fit in. But all that changes on the football pitch. You may not speak the local language yet, but the language of football is universal. You may not have learned the local customs yet, but football's rules of fair play and mutual respect are a wonderful place to start.

So let us use football also as a tool for integration.

There is one last thing about football I would like to tell you: In football, when you win a game, you are happy until the next game. When you lose a game, you are sad. But just for a short while. Because you know that the next game is coming soon and you are going to win that next game! Football teaches us to always look ahead with a positive attitude and to never give up.

Dear Leaders, I am not so naïve to believe that football or any other sport can change the world but I do firmly believe that football can be a powerful tool, a force for good, to make our world a better place: A more prosperous, a more educated, a more equal and, maybe, just maybe, a more peaceful place. This is what brings you all to Buenos Aires. These are your priorities as the Leaders of the World and this is the hope that your peoples have placed in you.

So, on behalf of all of us at the new FIFA, and of all the football players and fans around the world, we are honored to be a credible and reliable partner for you: as of now and for the future.

You are our hope. And Football can be your tool! Together!

Thank you for the great honor of addressing you today.

**END**