

**FIFA<sup>®</sup>**

# **FIFA PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS**

**CAF ELECTIVE GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2021**

**Friday, 12 March 2021**



Dear Constant, dear Fouzi, dear members of the CAF executive committee, dear Patrice, dear family of African and international football, it is a great pleasure to be with you today in Rabat, Morocco, for this 43rd CAF Congress. I would like to thank our hosts, the Royal Moroccan Football Federation, for their warm welcome.

Today is a party, it is a day of celebration. It's the celebration of African unity. It is an important day because you are going to elect your president, but you are also going to elect your team to lead CAF as well as the CAF representatives within FIFA.

It's very important to put together these two words: "unity" and "team". Because, as a team, together, we win. Alone we lose. Football is a team sport. Football teaches us a lot of things. We know the values of football, but the most important value is team spirit. This is the team spirit that we have witnessed these days in Africa.

I must say over the last few months, I have spoken with probably all of you present here. I have spoken with the four candidates for the presidency. You all have the same vision, the same idea. You all want a strong and united Africa, projecting itself forward. And today, it is the celebration of this unity. And it is thanks to you, it is your decision, your wish, your hope and your ambition.

I have already said it, and I say it again. We must stop saying that it is necessary to develop African football. It is about projecting it to the summit of world football. The time for talking has stopped. We must move on, and we must move on as a team: as a CAF team and a FIFA team that also includes all the confederations and associations from all over the world. You are CAF. You are FIFA.

We are the same team, and as a team, we can win. We will win. And the time to win, dear friends, the challenges as far as FIFA is concerned are here. Of course, today we celebrate, but from tomorrow, even from this evening, we begin to work. We work to invest in infrastructure, to invest in development, to invest in good governance and to invest in competitions. You know all of this. You have chosen to go, united, in this direction.

The time is now, dear friends. The time to act is now. The time to move to the next level is now. The time to project African football to the top level is now, to make football truly global is now, in collaboration with the entire world, and in collaboration with FIFA as part of the same team.

As far as FIFA is concerned, we have been doing quite a lot together in recent years. We have multiplied by five the investments in solidarity. You are no longer receiving USD 300,000 per year, you are receiving USD 1.5 million per year to invest in football projects. In the last five years, over 300 projects have been developed here in Africa. More than 100 of these on infrastructure. This is what will make the difference tomorrow.

We have increased the number of teams for the 2026 FIFA World Cup which is in only five years' time. You will no longer have five teams, or six teams, or seven teams playing at the World Cup. You will have nine or ten national teams, playing at the World Cup. We have doubled the number of African teams playing at the World Cup because the World Cup is a celebration of global football, and Africa needs to be present. And it needs to be present in force. But Africa should not just be present at the World Cup. Africa has to perform at the World Cup. It has to play a leading role in the World Cup. And the work to do that, dear friends, starts today, because five years is very soon and thereafter it will always be nine, potentially ten, African teams playing in the World Cup.

This allows you all to invest in football development. To invest in your youth players, to invest in the national teams because you have a real chance to anticipate and to participate continuously in World Cups. Not only once every 20 years, if you are lucky with the draw, or if you are lucky with the results.

We did the same for the FIFA Women's World Cup, because women's football is the future, above all in Africa. The next Women's World Cup in 2023, in Australia and New Zealand, will have 32 teams in total. From Africa, there will not be three teams anymore, but it will be four for sure, and potentially six, because two more teams will play in a qualification tournament with teams from other confederations, and the best two teams will qualify. So, potentially, again, we double the number of African women's teams in the FIFA Women's World Cup. Because we need to invest in women's football, because women are 50 per cent of our population, and because we have seen in the last Women's World Cup in France what women's football can bring to all of us. So it is a priority.

Then dear friends, as you know, we are living in a very difficult time with this pandemic. One year ago yesterday, the World Health Organization declared that COVID is a pandemic. One year ago today, at about this time or slightly earlier, I was in the office of Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus at the World Health Organization, you all know him, a big football fan. The day after the WHO declared COVID to be a pandemic, I was in his office and I told him: Tell us how football can help you. And we started campaigns, and we started to help. A little bit, as much as we can, because this pandemic has told us many things. It has shown us how vulnerable we are. It has shown us how global the world has become. How interconnected we are. A small virus like that brings everyone to standstill. But it shows us as well that health is the biggest value we have, and we have to protect health all together.

That is why, together, we will have elaborated protocols to come back to football. And that is why, all together, I would like to thank here the members of the FIFA Council, we have been able to establish a COVID-19 Relief Plan with a global value of USD 1.5 billion to keep football alive, and many of you have confirmed to me that thanks to the support of the FIFA COVID-19 Relief Plan, football has survived, because football is hope. Football is joy.

Football is much more than sport, and we are collaborating, as you know as well, with the African Union in this respect. I have met with many African leaders in the last few years, in the last few months, and in the last few weeks, and I have met with Félix Tshisekedi, the current Chairperson of the African Union and together we have designed a project on school football that we will roll out all together, the whole African football community, together with the African Union, together with CAF and FIFA. Because football is future, and football is hope, and the decisions that you will be taking for African football today will help the African continent to prosper more on a global level. Because at FIFA, as well, we want to make football truly global. And if Africa wins, FIFA wins.

We want to have 50 national teams from all over the world who can really become world champions. We are here in Morocco, the first African country to participate in a World Cup in 1970. And all other African countries who have participated reached the quarter-finals at best. We need to do better, and we will do better.

Similarly, we have to focus on club football, because the national teams are based on the clubs, and we need to discuss in future about the international match calendar and club football as well. We want to have 50 clubs from all over the world who can realistically become world champions. And Africa is part of the world, and we have here, my dear friend Moïse Katumbi from TP Mazembe, who were the first African club to qualify for the final, in 2010, of the FIFA Club World Cup, showing the way with what is possible through commitment, passion, and engagement. Unfortunately, the final was lost against Inter Milan, but

this happens, and Raja Casablanca also qualified for the final a few years later, so it is possible. But it cannot be down to just one person or two persons or three persons. It has to be a team. It has to be through unity. It has to be through unity for Africa and it has to be through unity for the world.

With this in mind, I would like to congratulate you all for your wisdom, for your engagement, for your passion. I want to wish all the very best for the next four years, to the new leading team of CAF, of African football, and to Patrice Motsepe, to all those who have been involved, to Augustin, Ahmed, Jacques and everyone. I want to assure you that FIFA is not at your side, but FIFA is together with you.

The FIFA President is proud to be part of your team to create a successful story for African football all over the world. With this in mind, I wish you a great Congress. I wish you a wonderful celebration of unity.

You can always count on me. You can always count on us.

Thank you very much for your attention. Vive le football. Vive l'Afrique. Thank you. Shukran.