

Guidelines for Promoting the Involvement of Women on the FIFA Council

Preamble

One of FIFA's objectives is the promotion of "the development of women's football and the full participation of women at all levels of football governance."¹ Each confederation is "required to work closely with FIFA in every domain" to achieve this objective.²

Assisting the confederations in a constructive spirit

In order to achieve this objective, it is necessary for women to participate actively at every level of FIFA's governance structure. To this end, the FIFA Statutes require that each confederation elect at least one woman to the FIFA Council.³ The FIFA Statutes further provide that a confederation that fails to elect a woman will have one less representative on the FIFA Council.⁴ This requirement is a minimum: it is not a statement about what level of female representation is sufficient to achieve the objective of promoting the participation of women in football governance, and it is certainly not a maximum. It should form part of an overall programme of encouraging and developing the role of women in football governance in FIFA, in each confederation, and in each member association.

As a result, when confederations conduct elections to the FIFA Council, the election of *at least* one female candidate should be ensured by using an electoral system that neither suggests that only one woman should be elected, nor has the effect of encouraging that outcome in practice. Women should be encouraged to run for *all* seats on the FIFA Council. This includes generally available seats, seats reserved by confederations for specific regions or linguistic groupings (if any), and confederation presidencies. In particular, an electoral system that encourages women to run only for a "women's seat" does not comply with the objective of promoting the *full* participation of women.

The FIFA Governance Committee is charged with the supervision of electoral processes and with ensuring the correct application of the FIFA Statutes, including the statutory obligation to elect at least one female candidate.⁵ The Governance Committee recognises that compliance with this obligation may present some challenges in designing and operating an electoral process, and may require some revisions to processes currently used by confederations. The Governance Committee has already alerted the confederations to some problems that it identified while monitoring the elections for the FIFA Council and expressed its willingness to assist the confederations in the adaptations of their electoral procedures necessary for them to fully comply with FIFA rules promoting female representation. Accordingly, in order to support confederations in meeting these

¹ Article 2(f), FIFA Statutes.

² Article 22(3)(b), FIFA Statutes.

³ Article 33(5), FIFA Statutes.

⁴ Article 33(5), FIFA Statutes.

⁵ Articles 27(5)(b), 62(b), FIFA Governance Regulations.

challenges, the Governance Committee has formulated these Guidelines which advise on how the election of a female candidate can be ensured while generally preserving the confederation's autonomy in the structure and operation of its own electoral processes. Naturally, confederations are free to choose a different electoral procedure so long as it complies with the principles identified above. The Governance Committee anticipates, however, that an election procedure structured consistently according to these Guidelines would comply with the statutory obligation to elect a female representative.

Guidelines

The Governance Committee recommends that a confederation should not label any of its seats on the FIFA Council as a “women’s seat”, and should certainly not create a separate category in which women are encouraged to run to the exclusion of other categories. This is because this is likely to have the effect, in practice, of limiting the participation of women and discouraging women from contesting other positions. Instead, the election of at least one female representative to the FIFA Council in a manner consistent with the letter and spirit of the FIFA Statutes can be ensured by observing the following rules.

VARIATION ONE

The FIFA Statutes provide that a confederation that does not elect *at least* one woman to the FIFA Council shall lose one seat. In other words, one seat is a “conditional seat” because it will be forfeited if the confederation fails to elect a female candidate to the FIFA Council. Confederations should implement this rule by first conducting the voting for all other (“non-conditional”) seats and then holding a final round of voting for the “conditional seat”.

1. Elect representatives to all non-conditional seats. Elections of representatives for the non-conditional seats should be conducted without regard to gender and according to the applicable rules of FIFA and the confederation. If confederations allocate seats to specific groups of member associations (e.g. by location or linguistic grouping), they may continue to do so if they wish.

2. Determine who is in principle an available candidate for the conditional seat. In principle, any candidate who has not already been elected to a non-conditional seat is in principle an available candidate for the conditional seat – including but not limited to female candidates who stood unsuccessfully for election to a non-conditional seat. This rule is designed to encourage the full participation of women and to prevent the conditional seat from becoming a *de facto* “women’s seat”.

3. Resolve the status of the conditional seat. The results of the elections to the non-conditional seats determine the status of the conditional seat and the manner in which it should be filled:

- a) if a female candidate was elected to at least one non-conditional seat, any candidate may be elected to the conditional seat without regard to gender;
- b) if no female candidate was elected to any of the non-conditional seats, the conditional seat must be filled by a female candidate and remaining male candidates are ineligible;
- c) if no female candidate was elected to one of the non-conditional seats *and* there are no female candidates at the time of voting, the conditional seat is declared null and is forfeited.

VARIATION TWO

1. Confederations may reserve some seats for a subset of member associations, but at least one seat should be open (i.e. non-reserved) and elections to reserved seats should be conducted in a separate initial round of voting. Some confederations reserve FIFA Council

seats for nominees of specific groups of member associations defined by location or linguistic grouping (“reserved seats”). Confederations may continue this practice if they wish, but at least one seat should be an “open seat” (i.e. not a reserved seat), and the elections to any reserved seats should take place in a separate preliminary round of voting. This rule is necessary because it is difficult to equitably apply the rule requiring the election of at least one female candidate to a reserved seat. Confederation rules should clearly state whether an unsuccessful candidate for a reserved seat will then be eligible for an open seat.

The following rule will ensure the election of at least one female candidate to an open seat. When designing its electoral rules, a confederation may choose to provide that the following rule shall not apply in the event that a female candidate is elected to a reserved seat. Alternatively, in the interests of diversity, a confederation may choose to provide that the rule shall apply regardless of whether a female candidate is elected to a reserved seat.

2. Elections to the open seats should take place in two rounds: a female-only round and then a general round. In the first round, all female candidates, and only female candidates, should be eligible, and one seat should be awarded to the winning candidate. In the second round, all candidates should be eligible (including all male candidates for the open seats as well as female candidates who were not elected in the preceding round), and in this round the remaining open seats should be awarded as normal.

3. If there are no female candidates for open seats (and if no female candidate has been elected to a reserved seat), the number of open seats should be reduced by one before voting for open seats takes place. The FIFA Statutes provide that a confederation that does not elect at least one woman to the FIFA Council shall lose one seat. If there is *no* such female candidate at the time of voting for the open seats (and if no female candidate has already been elected to a reserved seat), the number of open seats should be reduced by one before voting in that category takes place. This may result in the reduction of seats to zero (i.e. the elimination of the open category). Such a reduction should be announced to delegates before voting, which can then take place as normal. The committee recommends proceeding in this way to avoid having to eliminate one candidate *after* the election has been conducted.

VARIATION THREE

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2. Award one open seat to the female candidate with the most first-round votes; award the remaining seats as normal. After voting for the open seats has taken place, award one open seat to the female candidate who has received the most first-round votes. The remaining seats should then be awarded as normal (this may involve additional rounds of voting as necessary).