

## **SPEECH BY FIFA PRESIDENT JOSEPH S. BLATTER TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION GENEVA, MARCH 21, 2013**

Delivered by Federico Addiechi – FIFA Head of Corporate Social Responsibility

### **INTRODUCTION**

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honour to be here today on the International Day For The Elimination Of Racial Discrimination on behalf of FIFA President Joseph S. Blatter.

President Blatter is not able to join us today due to a meeting of FIFA's Executive Committee, which is taking place at this very moment in Zurich.

I am before you today to deliver a message from President Blatter on a subject that runs to the very heart of our mission as the world's governing body of football.

This gravest of subjects is one that FIFA treats with the utmost sincerity and the utmost urgency.

Nothing speaks more of injustice than the scourge of racism and intolerance in our world. It is a vile, destructive force. No right thinking individual believes otherwise.

But still it can rear its ugly head anywhere – in the boardrooms of our biggest businesses, in the casual conversations at our restaurant tables, on the bustle of our street corners and, yes, on the turf of our football pitches and the stands of our stadia.

We must not live in denial and pretend that all the battles have been won against racism.

Racism is all around us – explicitly, in physical and verbal abuse, but also lurking under the surface in less obvious, but equally damaging, ways.

When a player has to choose between leaving the field of play to make a statement against racism or staying on the pitch and tolerating the intolerable, we know the football community has fallen short of its obligations to protect its members.

Despite the many victories we have won in football against discrimination and prejudice, we know we still have a problem today and we know more has to change. We have to step up our efforts, to keep fighting. We at FIFA supported Kevin Prince-Boateng for making that principled, brave stand.

But we all know it was not a solution. It was a wake-up call. No player should have to make that choice.

We, within the footballing community, now need a watertight commitment from grassroots to international level to better enforce FIFA's tough anti-discrimination regulations.

And we hope to work with Kevin and other high-profile figures in the game to root out racism once and for all.

## **RACISM AND FOOTBALL**

Sadly, there are those who want to make a scapegoat out of football. They point the finger at football and say racism is purely a problem for our sport, as if only football is to blame.

We all know this is wrong. But it is also extremely dangerous. It breeds complacency.

Racism is not just a problem for football. Football mirrors society – the good and the bad.

It will be impossible to defeat racism without a concerted, sustained and genuine effort from all branches of life – politics, society, law and business. Football cannot cure society's ills but, if our sport works together, the football community can set an example for the rest of the world to follow.

The very spirit of football is one of equality. There are few things that bring different people together in the way that our beautiful game can.

France's triumph in the 1998 FIFA World Cup was sealed by a team seen by all as the success story of a modern, open and multicultural European nation. Patrick Vieira, Zinedine Zidane and Marcel Desailly became role models for a generation of French youngsters, showing what can be achieved if we embrace and celebrate diversity.

At the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa, Germany fielded a young, talented national team in which almost half the players were drawn from an immigrant background.

Chancellor Angela Merkel hailed this "international team" as proof of Germany's very own success in social integration.

Right here in Switzerland, the national team showcases the power of diversity – Gokhan Inler, Xherdan Shaqiri and Johan Djourou – players from different backgrounds working together as one, and currently sitting on top of their qualifying group for the 2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil.

The football pitch is a great leveller where talent and hard work shine through regardless of your background, ethnicity or culture. The ball does not discriminate and neither should we.

## **FIFA AGAINST RACISM**

The diversity that runs throughout football is a testament to the values of the game and a lesson for all society. These are values that FIFA actively promotes. Since day one, our ambition has been to take the game to the world, to all nations and all people.

At FIFA, we have endeavoured to lead and influence the global football community – confederations, member associations, clubs, officials, players and fans.

We have worked hard over the years to create a framework of the highest possible standards for others to follow.

- In 2001, FIFA officially promised to combat racism, a landmark decision in the game.
- Three years later, we created a Code of Conduct, banning outright discrimination in all its despicable forms.
- We have strengthened our Statutes to make it clear that prejudice, whatever guise it may take, can have no place in the beautiful game.

Let me read from Article 3 of those Statutes, which states that: “discrimination of any kind against a country, private person or group of people on account of ethnic origin, gender, language, religion, politics or any other reason is strictly prohibited and punishable by suspension or expulsion.”

You can't get much more explicit than that. Zero tolerance.

Those values are enshrined in our mission. They are part of FIFA's DNA. Those Statutes are, in fact, the basis for the statutes of all of our 209 Member Associations - guidelines for the entire world of football.

FIFA will not tolerate discrimination in any form. It has no place in football and no place in our stadia. Strong words. But, of course, strong words mean nothing without equally strong action.

Tomorrow (March 22), Hungary and Bulgaria will play 2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil qualifiers behind closed doors because of the unforgivable actions of some of their fans at previous games. If fans want to watch international FIFA matches, they must respect the diversity that enriches our game.

FIFA is establishing an Anti-Racism Taskforce, headed by CONCACAF President and FIFA Vice President Jeffrey Webb, to investigate not only what additional deterrents are needed against racism, but also how to educate and inspire a positive change in attitudes and behaviour throughout the game.

As I speak to you today, Mr Webb and the FIFA President are discussing those possible measures with the rest of the Executive Committee. We know fines may not be enough. Deducting points from a team could send a very strong message. Relegating or eliminating a team from a competition could send an even stronger message.

If you tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism, you will face the consequences. This is the message that players need us, as football's authorities, to send.

### **CO-ORDINATED ACTION**

For this approach to be effective, however, we need to call on another of the values that we promote in football. We need solidarity.

It is one thing for me to stand here today and tell you that FIFA will not tolerate racism and to explain to you what we are doing as an organisation to ensure, from our end, football truly is a sport for all.

But if the entire football community does not act as one, we will fail our players again and again.

Our confederations, member associations, clubs, officials and fans must join us. We call on this wonderful, diverse and powerful network of football to unite in zero tolerance against racism:

- To educate, to inspire respect and equal opportunity for all
- To impose punishments severe enough to drive racism from the pitch, from our stadia and from our clubs and organisations
- To send a strong message to the rest of the world that football is united against the politics of hate

### **THE FIFA PROMISE**

We have come a long way in the fight against racism. But there is still a long way to go. Not only do we need to stamp out racial abuse but we also need to improve opportunities throughout the game – to smash the glass ceilings that exist in administration and management.

The disease of racism has scarred society for too long and continues to blight our world today. No one but a victim of racial abuse or discrimination can know what it is to suffer that abuse – the humiliation, the anger, the injustice. And no one can tell another human being how to respond to that abuse. But we can help. We can act. And we have the power and the opportunity to do so now.

For the Game. For the World. That is the FIFA claim.

The FIFA logo is displayed in white, bold, uppercase letters on a dark blue background. The letters are spaced out, and a registered trademark symbol (®) is located at the top right of the 'A'.

*For the Game. For the World.*

We believe football is a sport to be loved and enjoyed by all, no matter who you are or where you are from.

FIFA will work tirelessly, with all of our partners in football, towards the day when racism no longer shames our beautiful game. That is the FIFA promise.