



Resolution 2053 (2015)¹

The reform of football governance

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly recognises the educational and social value of sport. It considers good governance of sports organisations essential in order to promote the values of our democratic societies, and attaches the highest importance to the responsibility which sports organisations bear – and must fully assume – for furthering and safeguarding human rights and the rule of law. All sports organisations must give proper consideration to ensuring effective protection of the fundamental rights enshrined in international binding instruments and, in Europe, in the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5).

2. The Assembly welcomes the fact that sport is an important economic activity and that the major sports organisations are able to support the development of sport in every part of the world. It is nevertheless concerned that secrecy in the decision-making processes of certain sports organisations and flaws in their mechanisms for preventing and sanctioning breaches of sports ethics may foster corruption and financial misappropriations. The scandals which tarnish the image of sport confirm that this risk is quite real.

3. The Assembly reaffirms that the need to preserve the independence of sports movements is attended by the constraint of ensuring that this independence does not become a front for justifying inaction against malpractices that flout sports ethics and dealings that come, or should come, under criminal law when business organisations are concerned.

4. It is necessary to combat corruption not only in the field of sports, but also within sports organisations. The latter must be committed to developing a culture of transparency and to establishing internal self-regulatory procedures which ensure irreproachable management of their financial resources, stringent controls to prevent any illegal holding of personal interest and effective investigation and detection mechanisms allowing any breach of sports ethics to be sanctioned.

5. Football holds a special place in the world of sport: for its universal coverage; for its impact on untold millions of supporters; for the financial and political implications of its major events such as the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup or the European Football Championship of the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA EURO). For this reason, the Assembly considers that, along with the International Olympic Committee (IOC), FIFA and UEFA bear the greatest responsibility and duty to be exemplary in their external action and in their systems of internal governance.

6. The IOC has shown that it is possible to make reforms and to bring about far-reaching changes. The UEFA has a legal framework at the leading edge in the field of preventing conflicts of interest and fighting corruption. It is exemplary in the promotion of financial fair play and in its stand against match-fixing. The Assembly commends, in particular, the support which UEFA gives to the process of ratifying and implementing the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (CETS No. 215).

7. Likewise, the Assembly welcomes the genuine initiatives of FIFA against the manipulation of matches and its action to aid the development of football in all regions of the world. The Assembly also notes that the reforms carried out so far by FIFA have considerably improved its statutory and regulatory framework.

1. *Assembly debate* on 23 April 2015 (17th Sitting) (see [Doc. 13738](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Mr Michael Connarty). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 23 April 2015 (17th Sitting).



8. Nevertheless, FIFA does not yet seem capable of putting an end to corruption scandals. The findings of the inquiry conducted by the investigatory chamber of the FIFA Ethics Committee concerning the award of the World Cup to Russia for 2018 and to Qatar for 2022, even though they have been disclosed only partially, show that extremely dubious practices are widespread, as if they formed an integral part of the system.

9. The Assembly notes that FIFA, following this inquiry, has decided to bring a complaint before the Swiss courts. The Assembly regrets, however, that FIFA's internal provisions prevent the publication of the investigatory chamber's report and is amazed at the ease with which the adjudicatory chamber of the FIFA Ethics Committee has confirmed the decision to assign the 2022 World Cup to Qatar.

10. The Assembly feels that this decision was radically flawed. The documents divulged in the *Sunday Times* – whose authenticity seems unarguable – compel the conclusion beyond all reasonable doubt that Mr bin Hammam paid over 30 senior representatives of the African football community (nearly all of them presidents of national football associations) and/or their national associations large sums of money to assure Qatar of the votes of the representatives of the Confédération Africaine de Football (CAF) on the FIFA Executive Committee at the vote on 2 December 2010.

11. The votes of these members of the FIFA Executive Committee were of strategic importance for Qatar to be able to get ahead of the other bidding countries belonging to the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), namely Australia, Japan and South Korea. After their elimination, Mr bin Hammam, who was AFC President at the time, was sure of the votes for Qatar of the AFC representatives on the FIFA Executive Committee.

12. In these circumstances, FIFA cannot evade the obligation to hold a new vote under its new rules on the allocation of major events, including the World Cup. The claim that Qatar does not have direct responsibility for Mr bin Hammam's dealings should not be allowed to validate a procedure so fundamentally undermined by illegality.

13. Consequently, the Assembly recommends that FIFA:

13.1. speedily open a new procedure for the award of the 2022 World Cup and ensure – by means including the immediate adoption of new provisions – the establishment of adequate information and supervision mechanisms that genuinely guarantee equality between bidding countries and a final decision strictly founded on the merit of their projects;

13.2. urgently requests the authorities of Qatar to:

13.2.1. take without delay all necessary measures to secure respect for the fundamental rights of all foreign migrant workers employed in their country;

13.2.2. co-operate with the International Labour Organization (ILO) in verifying the effective observance of these rights by both public and private enterprises operating in Qatar;

13.2.3. act with the utmost firmness to punish all abuses by companies or individuals and assure all victims of just redress for harm suffered;

13.3. carry on the reforms which it has commenced and follow the specific recommendations adopted by the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media on 27 January 2015 (see Appendix 1 to the report entitled "The reform of football governance", [Doc. 13738](#)).

14. The Assembly recommends that UEFA:

14.1. support – directly and through the agency of its representatives on the FIFA Executive Committee – governance reforms within FIFA, and in particular all the recommendations made to FIFA in this resolution;

14.2. follow the specific recommendations adopted by the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media on 27 January 2015 (see Appendix 2 to the report entitled "The reform of football governance", [Doc. 13738](#)).

15. The Assembly appeals to all international sports organisations, and in particular the IOC, FIFA and UEFA, to:

15.1. ensure that any country bidding for the organisation of major sports events undertakes, in all activities linked to the organisation and conduct of the event, to abide by international standards in respect of fundamental rights, including the standards of the ILO;

15.2. strengthen co-operation with the relevant intergovernmental organisations to promote human rights through sport and foster their effective protection, in particular through their development programmes.

16. Also referring to its [Resolution 1875 \(2012\)](#) on good governance and ethics in sport and to the guidelines which it contains, the Assembly invites all sports organisations to make constant efforts to improve their governance. In this respect, the Assembly stresses the need to ensure:

16.1. transparency of the decision-making process;

16.2. strict adherence to rules forbidding any improper inducements to gain advantage in the award of major events or when deciding financial disbursements;

16.3. financial transparency, including of the salaries and indemnities drawn by the elected executives and senior management;

16.4. the introduction of procedures for verifying integrity and of effective mechanisms to prevent, detect and punish all acts of corruption and financial misappropriation;

16.5. a periodic renewal in the discharge of the offices of president of the organisation and membership of a governing body or of a judicial body of the organisation;

16.6. adequate participation of relevant stakeholders in the decision-making process;

16.7. fair representation of women in the governing bodies.

17. Lastly, the Assembly asks the Council of Europe member States to establish a legal framework encouraging sports organisations under their jurisdiction to combat corruption and illegal holding of personal interest, including the adoption of legislative provisions to ensure that:

17.1. sports organisations called on to manage significant sums of money are subjected to transparent accounting and budgetary rules applicable to commercial companies, even if sports organisations are constituted as non-profit concerns;

17.2. acts of private corruption committed in the performance of functions in sports organisations are classified as offences under criminal law and as such are subject to mandatory prosecution.