

# 74<sup>TH</sup> FIFA<sup>®</sup> CONGRESS BANGKOK, 2024



## FIFA President's Address

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# FIFA President's Address

## 1: Welcome

Football Unites the World is our theme. Let's start with agenda item number 1. The welcome. So, *sawadee ka* - means hello in Thai, I'm told. Correct? Yeah? Hello everyone. Good morning, everyone, welcome everyone, all the delegates, the presidents, the vice-presidents of FIFA, (FIFA) Council members, confederation representatives, guests, members of the media.

Welcome to Bangkok, the capital of the world, the capital of the world of football, but as we know, football is the most important thing in the world, so it is the capital of the world and the home of football for all of us. I would like to thank the kingdom of Thailand for the warmest of welcomes that we received here. We feel (at) home, thank you very much.

This is, ladies and gentlemen, a real football country, a country that loves the game, a country that celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2016, the year I was elected FIFA President. And I was here for that celebration. A country that won the South-East Asian Cup [ASEAN Championship] last year, beating Vietnam in the final. And I was here for that match as well.

A country that will celebrate 100 years of membership of FIFA in 2025, next year. And I will be here to celebrate that one as well, I think. One hundred years (as) members of FIFA makes it the oldest member of FIFA from Asia. And I want to congratulate you for that. I would also like to thank his Excellency, the Prime Minister [Srettha Thavisin], for hosting us two days ago in his palace. It was fantastic. Unfortunately, he had to leave on a state visit to Europe, to France and to Italy, amongst others. But we cherish the joint moments that we spent with the Prime Minister. The Deputy Prime Minister [Suriya Juangroongruangkit] is here with us.

I would also like to congratulate Madame Pang [Nualphan Lamsam], who is here with us. Madame Pang was recently elected three months ago as president of the Thailand Football Association, first [female] president of the Thailand Football Association and the first [female] president of a football association in the whole of Asia, dear Sheikh Salman (bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa).

So, congratulations. Congratulations as well to Thailand for qualifying for the FIFA Futsal World Cup now this year in Uzbekistan and, of course, as we know, there is much more to come both in men's as in women's football. This is everything we wish for you. For now, thank you very much for welcoming the world to Thailand. *Kap khun klap*. Thank you very much.

And, with this, I would like to ask the deputy Prime Minister of Thailand Mr Suriya [Juangroongruangkit] to come on stage and to address the audience please.



## **2: Main address**

So, dear friends, dear Madame Pang [Nualphan Lamsam], president of the Thai Football Association, dear vice-presidents of FIFA, (FIFA) Council members, delegates, presidents, general-secretaries, members of the media, friends, the (FIFA) Legends, of course, here present. The Legends are those who make our hearts beat, and we should never forget that.

We were saying (that) Football Unites the World. But we all know as well that today, we are living in a very aggressive world, in a very divided world. So, uniting this world is our responsibility, it is our answer to the aggression, our answer to the hate, our answer to the war. It is bringing people from all over the world together – this is what football does, from south to north from east to west.

No matter which country, which religion – nothing matters. The only thing that matters is the colour of the jersey that the players will wear for their club or for their national team. So, my pledge to start this address to all of you: is let's focus on what unites us rather than on what divides us. And, there is much more that unites us – believe me – than there are things that divide us. Many of us understand it. We understood it, the Council understood (it) and I would like to thank each and every Council member for the very wise and unanimous decisions we have been taking in the recent past to bring the world together such as for the organisation of future (FIFA) World Cups and other decisions and events. We have to understand that we depend [on] each other, and the bigger depends [on] the smaller and vice versa.

And, of course, we have to be strong. We have to have a strong organisation, we have to be a strong FIFA, and we are a strong FIFA.

We are a strong FIFA thanks to the way we live. Thanks to the value and the values we channel: good governance, integrity, transparency. Thanks to the way we work. Thanks [to] the fact that we are, at the same time, global and local.

Our headquarters are in Zurich, in Switzerland, but we are present all over the world. And we are opening offices all over the world because if you want to truly be global, you have to be with your people all over the world to have a real impact.

And we are strong because we have been able to multiply by seven the solidarity payments to all Member Associations through the (FIFA) Forward programmes – over USD 2 billion in the current period – and this will, of course, augment.

And we have been able to stand by each other in the period of crisis, in the period of the pandemic, in the period of COVID(-19) as the only organisation in the world – we have been able to set up a (FIFA) COVID(-19) Relief Fund worth (USD) 1.5 billion to help those in need to keep the flame of football alive all over the world. Dear friends, our duty is exactly what I just said.

**Translated from French:** Dear friends, our duty is to offer more opportunities everywhere in the world, the opportunity to play, dream, be involved and, sometimes, change (lives). Also, the



opportunity to grow not only as a football player, but also as a human being. And, as our mission is to help football grow on an international scale, we focus both on football and on the world.

Let's take women's football as an example. What have we achieved in the women's game so far? Well, we have gone from 24 to 32 national teams participating in the (FIFA Women's) World Cup.

And, it was a big hit, with a total of over two million people attending the matches and over two billion TV viewers. In terms of bonuses, we have gone from [USD] 10 million allocated in 2015 to [USD] 152 million in 2023.

And, it will keep increasing, of course. We are heading in the right direction. In terms of girls and U16s, we are going to go from 16 to 24 national teams.

Also, the current biennial (FIFA) World Cups are going to be yearly (FIFA) World Cups, because every little girl in the world is allowed to dream about playing in a (FIFA) World Cup. As for the U-20 girls, we have also gone from a 16-team to a 24-team (FIFA) World Cup.

Two days ago, together with the (FIFA) Council, we have decided to launch two new competitions: a new (FIFA) Women's Club World Cup, which will start in 2026, because clubs are an important part of the growth of female players; and, a new (FIFA) Women's Futsal World Cup, the first edition of which will start in the Philippines next year. In conclusion, women's football is, of course, one of our top priorities at FIFA.

**Translated from Spanish:** Dear friends, as far as football is concerned, men's football, well, we did something, too. We went from 32 to 48 teams, national teams, participating in the (FIFA) World Cup, giving 16 additional countries the opportunity to qualify for the (FIFA) World Cup, the 2026 (FIFA) World Cup and to 100 additional countries the opportunity to dream about qualifying for the (FIFA) World Cup, the 2026 (FIFA) World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada.

We have also created a new (FIFA) Club World Cup, with 32 teams, that is going to take place next year, in 2025, in the United States. The best clubs on the planet, from every continent. The best 32 teams will face each other next year in June and July, in the United States, in a competition that will be a dream come true for all football lovers.

We will also revitalise the (FIFA) Intercontinental Cup, where the winner of the (UEFA) Champions League will face the winner of the rest of the world every year.

Youth football is important too, of course, so we have decided to hold (both the men's and women's) U-17 World Cups every year, and not only with 24 teams, but rather, doubling (that number). 48 countries, 48 national teams will play in the U-17 Youth World Cups from next year. For the U-20 (world Cup), which will be (held) every two years, there will be 24 (participating) teams.

**Reverting to English:** And, this year, we tested, as well, a new little event, the FIFA Series. In March of every two years in the even years, we will give the opportunity to all the countries, to all of you around the world to play each other in what we called "the FIFA Series". We made a pilot of 24 countries, 24 national teams from six different confederations, playing in five venues, playing games, intercontinental games, that they would otherwise never play because it's so hard to qualify



for a (FIFA) World Cup. So, I would like to thank the hosts of this FIFA Series in 2024 – Sri Lanka, Algeria, Egypt, Azerbaijan, and Saudi Arabia – for hosting the world and these little tournaments, friendly games, friendly tournaments, which were having an invaluable, invaluable experience for those teams, because football and FIFA have to be there for everyone. We cannot exclude anyone.

Everyone has to have the opportunity and the possibility to participate. And that's why (you should) be ready for the next FIFA Series in 2026. In addition, I think, it would really be beautiful to think as well about a (FIFA) U-15 World Cup, or rather a festival for U-15 teams (for) boys and girls, but from all 211 countries this time.

Without (having the need for) qualification, everyone should be able to send a team to play in U-15 (football) festival somewhere in the world. Is it difficult, is it complicated, is it expensive? For sure. But it's certainly worth thinking about it. And we will debate, we will discuss, we will see what is feasible and what is possible. But, it's only worthwhile to think about giving boys and girls in all 211 of our countries an opportunity to meet each other in a festival and to participate in a football competition. Let's think about it.

By the way, speaking about competitions and I didn't really want to mention this, but I think it's maybe right to do that, I would like to clarify two things.

As I hear that FIFA is supposedly organising too many games in the charged calendar, right? This is one of the [criticisms] that comes from some parts.

The first point – actually, it's even before the first point – as you can see, the vast majority of events we organise are for youth and women's football. But, the first point is that when it comes to club competitions, for example, even with the new (FIFA) Club World Cup with 32 teams and 63 matches every four years, FIFA is organising around 1% – 1% of the games of the top clubs in the world – 1%. When it comes to the national teams, it's very, very similar, it's true. We increased the number of participants for the (FIFA) World Cup, but still it's one month every 48 months.

And if you look at all the national team games around the world, we are still between 1% to 2% of the matches which are organised by FIFA. All other matches – 98% to 99% of the matches – are organised by the different leagues, associations, confederations, by all of you, and that's good. That is OK. But here comes the thing, with this 1% or 2% of matches that FIFA organises,

FIFA is financing football all over the world. The revenues that we generate are not just going to a few clubs in one country. The revenues that we generate are going to 211 countries all over the world. There is no other organisation that does that. And we do it with 1% to 2% of the games that are organised in the world. So, I hope – I hope – that these figures that you can all, of course, check and calculate, show that we should probably stop this futile debate, which is really pointless, and focus on what we have to do, on what our mission is, which is to organise events and competitions, and to develop football around the world because 70% of you, of the member associations of FIFA would have no football without the resources coming directly from FIFA.

What can we do besides hosting competitions? We can and we will do a lot more.





We are opening FIFA Academies. Aren't we, Arsène [Wenger]? Are you there? At least 75 FIFA Academies will open around the world by 2027.

We will organise legend tours with legendary players some of which are here today and everywhere in the world. These will be worldwide tours so that every fan will have an opportunity to see them in real life and not just on TV screen. Also, why not think about setting up a (FIFA) Legends World Cup? It could be an interesting idea.

And, we will, of course, develop well. And, speaking here to the young generation like all of us here in this room, a very young generation like all of us here in this room, we will develop a new e-game because football simulation game is called FIFA for hundreds of millions of children around the world, when they play football simulation game, they play FIFA. It cannot be named something else. And, we are developing with new partners, a new game, which, obviously, as everything we do, will be the best. So, get ready for the new FIFA e-game.

And, we'll continue as well to develop VAR – VAR support – we'll hear about it later in this Congress.

We will set up an internship programme for the staff of all of you, of your members, the members of your staff who can come to FIFA to one of our offices for a period of time to learn and we can learn from them, from you as well. We will organise executive management courses for players to prepare them for their future. It is important we believe in that and that's what we will do.

We will continue to develop the (FIFA) Clearing House for the payments that have to go to the training clubs, those who form players, to train players, a solidarity mechanism, to make sure that the money goes where it has to go, and not where it should not go.

We will focus as well on social responsibility. Climate and climate change is high on our agenda, human rights are always on our agenda. Disabled football, whether blind, amputees or others, homeless football. There are so many wonderful people around the world who organise so many wonderful things with football. We should help them much more actively, and we will do that, of course.

And then, we have what's coming up next, what's coming up very soon, which is, of course, *Les Jeux Olympiques à Paris*, the Olympic Games in Paris, where I wish all the best to the teams that have qualified for the football tournament, which of course, we are organising. The (FIFA) U-17 Women's World Cup this year in Dominican Republic, the (FIFA) U-20 World Cup in Colombia, the (FIFA) Futsal World Cup in Uzbekistan – a lot to look forward (to). The new (FIFA) Club World Cup next year, obviously, in 2025, and then the (FIFA) World Cup in 2026 in Mexico, Canada and the United States, and this is for our American audience, in particular.

We all know what the Superbowl is. Well, what we can say to the Americans is that during one month in the summer of [20]26, you will have 104 Superbowls in one month in the United States and all over the world because the world will stand still. We'll have six million people in the stadiums, we'll have many more millions coming to the US, we'll have five billion, six billion people watching the (FIFA) World Cup on TV, and we will definitely make sure that it is a huge, huge success.



So look, a lot to look forward to; a lot of projects, a lot of passion, a lot of heart and a lot of work as well, even if it's not really work. And everything, obviously, starts with today, with the Congress of today, with the different agenda items [to] which we will come back as we move through the agenda.

Thank you very much, have a great (FIFA) Congress.

### **3: Global stand against racism / Closing remarks**

Good, so we can move now to agenda item 12, after this very important decision for the future of women's football and the FIFA Women's World Cup. We move to a very, very important item, to an item which concerns each and every one of us, even those who might think it doesn't concern us, they have to be concerned by it, and speaking about the global stand against racism in football. It's time to do something and let's start with a video...

[Video]

What a powerful video, what a powerful message here, friends. Racism is something terrible. It is a scourge that exists in our society. And is one also that is infiltrated in football. For too long. For too long we were not capable of dealing with it in an appropriate way. Racism and discrimination is something that, to me, is difficult, if not impossible, to understand. And when I hear that, well, racism is part of society and football is a reflection of society, so racism is also, obviously, part of football and there's nothing really we can do.

When I hear that I get even more angry, and I get even more upset, and I get even more committed to do something and to stop it now. We live in the year 2024. We live in a civilised world. There is no reason whatsoever, we should today, discriminate [against] anyone based on anything else. This is simply not admissible.

And if it is a problem of society, and if society cannot deal with it, well let's deal with it in football, once and for all. And sadly, we have seen in the past few months several incidents happening in many countries around the world. It's not a problem in one or two countries, it's a problem in many parts of the world, which is why we need, today, not just a FIFA resolution. We need today a global stand against racism. We need to stand up and fight racism, and defeat racism, altogether.

We cannot accept anymore what is happening in the stadiums, what is happening on the pitch. And those who still believe in the world, anywhere in the world, that they can still behave in a racist way when they are dealing with football, when they are attending a football game, when they are playing a game, those who believe that... We don't want them. We don't want them. They have to go out. They have to be out. They don't have to be part of our community. They don't have to be part of football.

And for this, a couple of months ago, I have been contacting a few players. And I have been speaking with them because I didn't know what shall we do? We have our regulations. We have our rules, but still, it seems that it is not really working. And with more players I spoke, more other players came on board, and (even) more players came on board. And everyone contributed giving



advice, giving opinions, telling us their stories, and telling us how they were feeling, and telling us what we could do to put an end (to) it.

Football is, (by) definition, a game where only meritocracy wins. If you are good, you play. If you're not good, you don't play, except if you are the FIFA President, and then you play all the time, but that is a different story.

It doesn't matter where you come from. From which country, from the South Pole to the North Pole, from the East to the West. If you are good, you play, if not, you don't play. And the only thing, the only colour that matters, I said it before, is the colour of the jersey that the players are wearing.

And so together with this panel of top, top players from all over the world, we have defined five pillars that we will implement as of today all over the world in all 211 countries in order to defeat once and for all racism.

Racism is darkness, and somebody much (wiser) and (more) intelligent than me once said: "If you are in a dark room, don't be afraid, just light a candle.". Today, we don't light a candle: we light a big fire that will shine all over the world. And I would like to ask five of the legends, who have participated in elaborating these five pillars to come on stage and to read each of these five pillars one by one, after which I would like you to have this global stand against racism. The first one I invite on stage is my friend, Emmanuel Adebayor. Please.

*Emmanuel Adebayor*

*Ladies and Gentlemen, pillar one: rules and Function.*

*We, together, enacted as global football, will make racism a specific offence with mandatory inclusion in the individual disciplinary code of all 211 (FIFA) Member Associations, differentiating racism from other incidents, giving acts of racism their own specific and severe sanctions, including match forfeit. Now I will talk as an old footballer. When I was playing it was tough. We all went through these moments and today, we can make a change.*

*As some of my brothers, legends like, [Clarence] Seedorf, Samuel Eto'o, a lot of the players have been through it, and I've also been through it; today, together, in this room, me being here I can assure you that it's looking like it's going to stop once and for all. Thank you.*

Thank you, my brother. Thank you. Next on stage: Iván Córdoba, por favor.

*Iván Córdoba*

***Translated from Spanish:** Good afternoon, everyone. The second pillar, the action on the playing field. All together, united as world football, we will interrupt and suspend matches temporarily, or permanently, when cases of racism arise.*

*We will introduce a universal normative gesture, with players reporting racist incidents and matches signaling the execution of the three-step procedure, which will be mandatory in all 211 FIFA member federations [associations]. Thank you so much.*





Muchas gracias, muchas gracias, hermano [Thank you. Thank you, brother]. And now, I want to call on stage Mia Fishel for the third pillar.

*Mia Fishel*

*Thank you for the introduction, Mr President. Pillar three: criminal charges. We, together united as global football, will push for recognition of racism as a criminal offence in every country in the world and, where already an offence, will push for prosecution with the severity it deserves. Thank you.*

Thank you very much. The Fourth Pillar. I want to call on stage Kanjana Sungngoen from Thailand. Sorry for my pronunciation.

*Kanjana Sungngoen*

*So, for the fourth pillar – education – we, together, united as global football in recognition that no child is born a racist. We will develop and promote educational initiatives together with schools and governments to provide a future free of racism.*

Thank you very much. And the last one Blaise Matuidi for the fifth pillar. S'il te plaît [Please], Blaise.

*Blaise Matuidi*

*Translated from French: Hello everyone. Pillar 5, the role of players. We, the great football family, are committed to creating an anti-racism panel, bringing together former players, which will be responsible for supervising and recommending the implementation of these measures throughout the world. Thanks.*

Merci beaucoup. Thank you very much. I would like simply now to ask all the legends, who are here, to come on stage with us to give us the weight that we need to convince – if there is a need to convince, because I am sure everyone is convinced already – to have this global stand against racism. Please, the legends who are here, join us on stage. Let's show the world the power of football.

Let's show the world that we are serious about ending racism now. And let's make sure that racism never comes up again in football. Let me on behalf of FIFA and as FIFA President thank all of these legends. They make our hearts beat. They made our hearts beat when they played. They make our hearts beat when we see them. This is incredible. They were all so engaged in this fight against racism. I want to thank them.

This is very very serious – we are dealing with it, we are stopping racism now. The fire is starting from Bangkok and covering the entire world, so I'm asking all the Member Associations of FIFA. Do you agree with these five pillars of a grand stand against racism to be applied?

Merci, merci. Well thank you very much. This is a very important signal to the world. Let's work on that. Let's work all together. I thank you all. I love you all. Thank you so much. Thank you.

OK, thank you very much to everyone. This was a very powerful and strong message from everyone here. Let me give a special thanks to Gelson Fernandes as well who worked tirelessly with this, together with Dan O'Toole.



Good, so we're coming to, I think, my concluding remarks – is that right? – on the agenda. I don't have the agenda in front of me. In front of me. Is that true? Yes? Yes? Number 13: President's Closing Remarks, which means we have to close a very important (FIFA) Congress, a very powerful Congress, a very moving Congress, as well, but this is what football is about, right?

Football is about emotions, it's about passion. We try to touch – you try to touch – the hearts of people and there is nothing more beautiful than touching the hearts and the feelings of people, and you do that every day as a top player, as a (FIFA) Legend, or as an administrator organising games and tournaments for girls and for boys in your cities, in your countries. Let me again congratulate Brazil for being the host of the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup, and in the euphoria of the discussions, somebody told me: "Well, we should think [about] the future, not [about] [20]27."

But, [about] the future to increase as well the number of teams for the (FIFA) Women's World Cup from 32 to 48 like we did for the men. More participants, more unity, more people happy? Well, let's see, let's see. We will work on that and many other things because, as I said at the beginning, football definitely unites the world, and we have to celebrate football. So, I don't know if you heard, but two weeks ago, more or less, the United Nations issued a resolution, unanimously – they're not unanimous on many things, but on this one they were – a unanimous resolution of the United Nations declaring 25 May (as) the World Football Day. Yes.

So, this is because on 25 May, 100 years ago, FIFA organised the first game of the first international tournament. At that time it was part of the Olympic games – 25 May. At the same time, on 21 May, a few years earlier – 1904, so 120 years ago, FIFA was founded in Paris by six Federations and one club on 21 May 1904, 120 years ago. So, my idea was, well, we could say that 21 May would be the World Football Day, but the United Nations preceded the FIFA Congress, so what I propose is that we make a World Football Week from the 21 May to 25 May, we celebrate football all over the world. We have fun, we enjoy, we play, we organise, we win, we lose. I usually win but you can play with me if you want. Thank you very much. These were my concluding remarks.

**ENDS**