

FIFA Emergency Congress



Committee: FIFA Emergency Congress

Topic: Preventing Corruption in International Football.

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I. Committee Background

International football is one of the most widely followed sports worldwide. It brings together millions of fans, players, clubs, national associations, and international organizations worldwide. As the sport has expanded commercially and institutionally, the importance of ensuring transparency, accountability, and ethical governance has become increasingly evident. Corruption within football institutions threatens the legitimacy of sporting competitions, undermines public confidence, and compromises the principles of fairness upon which international sport is founded.

The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), as the international governing body of association football, is responsible for regulating its competitions and overseeing its member associations in accordance with its statutes and regulations. FIFA's governance framework includes mechanisms intended to address ethical misconduct, disciplinary violations, and failures of institutional integrity. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these mechanisms depends upon their consistent implementation, institutional independence, and cooperation with relevant authorities.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) contributes to international efforts to prevent corruption and criminal activity in sport through research, technical assistance, capacity-building initiatives, and cooperation with governments and sporting organizations. Its work emphasizes the importance of coordinated preventive measures, effective legal frameworks, and institutional accountability.

Given the transnational nature of modern football, corruption may involve multiple jurisdictions, financial systems, and institutional actors. Consequently, addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach that recognizes the respective responsibilities of international organizations, national governments, law enforcement authorities, and football-governing bodies.

The purpose of this committee is to examine the structural and institutional factors that facilitate corruption in international football and to consider feasible, legally sound, and internationally coordinated measures to prevent misconduct, strengthen accountability, and safeguard the integrity of the sport.



II. Topic History

For decades, international football operated with very little outside oversight, which allowed widespread vote-buying, bribery, and hidden deals to surround major decisions such as choosing World Cup host nations. Independent journalists and whistleblowers spent years trying to expose these issues, but sports leaders routinely ignored their warnings.

The turning point came in May 2015, when law enforcement agencies from the United States and Switzerland launched massive criminal investigations. Police raided a luxury hotel in Zurich and arrested high-ranking FIFA officials on severe charges including wire fraud, racketeering, and money laundering tied to hundreds of millions of dollars in bribes. This historic scandal exposed deep-seated corruption, forcing long-time leadership out of office and pushing the global sport into an unprecedented crisis of trust.

To fix its broken system, international football had to overhaul how it operated by creating independent ethics, audit, and compliance committees to investigate bad behavior. Officials also introduced strict term limits for top executives, created independent background checks for leadership, established confidential reporting channels for whistleblowers, and stripped small executive groups of their voting power.

Instead, FIFA changed the World Cup hosting selection process to a fully transparent vote involving all member associations across the globe. While debates over complete transparency and governance continue today, the 2015 crisis permanently altered the sport by forcing governing bodies to adopt modern corporate compliance standards to protect the integrity of the game.

Today, efforts to prevent corruption extend far beyond administrative votes, focusing heavily on match-fixing, illegal betting networks, and financial integrity. International sports integrity bodies now run sophisticated Monitoring Systems that track worldwide sports betting markets in real time to spot suspicious gambling patterns before a match takes place. Additionally, strict regulatory frameworks—such as FIFA's updated Transfer Matching System (TMS)—mandate that every financial detail in player transfers be tracked digitally to prevent money laundering and secret commission payments to agents. Educational integrity workshops are also conducted for referees, players, and national teams to ensure everyone involved understands how to report illegal approaches.

III. Current Issues



While earlier structural reforms targeted executive bribery and high-level vote trading, modern corruption in international football has shifted toward complex, digital, and systemic challenges. Today, governing bodies and law enforcement agencies face a rapidly evolving landscape where financial manipulation, global betting markets, and governance accountability require continuous vigilance.

The rapid growth of online sports betting has created significant integrity risks. Criminal syndicates increasingly target lower-tier leagues, referee assignments, and player actions through spot-fixing—manipulating minor match events like yellow cards or corner counts—which are harder to detect than full-match results. In response, integrity units use real-time monitoring systems to track global betting movements and flag suspicious patterns before matches end.

Player transfers and agent commissions also remain high-risk areas for financial misconduct. Opaque transfer deals and secret payments can facilitate tax evasion, fraud, and money laundering. To combat this, global regulators have pushed for digitized transfer tracking systems and stricter registration requirements for intermediaries, ensuring transparency in every step of player movements.

Beyond financial oversight, major governance bodies face ongoing pressure from human rights groups and independent watchdogs regarding tournament hosting rights and executive accountability. Critics continue to demand independent external oversight, transparent decision-making, and robust protections for workers and whistleblowers to prevent conflicts of interest.

Maintaining integrity in modern football is no longer just about stopping bribes; it requires combining real-time data monitoring, strict financial regulations, and independent oversight to protect the sport at every level.

IV. United Nations Action

Recognizing that sports corruption often spans multiple borders, the United Nations has taken an increasingly active role in establishing global anti-corruption standards for international sports, including football. The primary driver behind these initiatives is the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which leverages the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)—the only legally binding international anti-corruption treaty—to hold sports federations, governments, and law enforcement agencies accountable to shared standards.

A key milestone in these efforts is the partnership established between UNODC and FIFA. Through a formal Memorandum of Understanding, the UN and football's governing body launched joint initiatives like the Global Integrity Programme. This initiative provides specialized training to integrity officers, prosecutors, and football associations across all 211 FIFA member countries. The curriculum focuses on identifying match manipulation, building confidential whistleblower mechanisms, and enforcing standardized sanctions so that bad actors cannot simply move to another region or league to avoid punishment.

In addition to capacity building, the UN actively targets the financial mechanisms that fuel sports crime. Through global research reports and policy conferences, UN agencies highlight how illegal online sports betting—an industry estimated at over \$1



trillion annually—acts as a main driver of match-fixing and money laundering. By collaborating with national law enforcement, global intelligence networks, and international sports federations, UN programs aim to strengthen law enforcement cooperation, standardize evidence gathering, and safeguard youth players and vulnerable leagues from organized crime networks.

To reinforce these multilateral commitments, the UN General Assembly and the Conference of the States Parties to UNCAC regularly adopt dedicated resolutions, such as Resolution 8/4 on safeguarding sport from corruption. These resolutions urge member states to enact domestic laws criminalizing sports bribery, protect whistleblowers, and restrict organized crime infiltration into sports organizations. They emphasize that host selection for major global events must remain transparent and subject to public accountability.

Furthermore, the UN places special emphasis on protecting youth academies and emerging international players, who are often targeted by illicit syndicates promising false professional contracts or visas. By coordinating intelligence between border security, national police units, and regional governing bodies like UEFA and CONMEBOL, UN frameworks help create rapid-response networks to disrupt human trafficking and financial exploitation linked to fake sports agencies.

Looking toward major international tournaments like the FIFA World Cup and Olympic Games, the UNODC continuously updates tailored anti-corruption toolkits. These guidelines provide event organizers with practical frameworks to evaluate procurement contracts, monitor ticket sales, prevent venue construction fraud, and conduct strict background checks on contractors—ensuring that global sports events operate cleanly from initial bids through the final whistle.

V. Essential Questions

1. How do we know if a game was actually fixed or if it was just a bad referee call?

Differentiating between an honest human mistake and deliberate match manipulation comes down to pattern analysis and off-pitch evidence. While a bad tackle or missed offside call happens in normal play, integrity units use sophisticated data algorithms to monitor global betting markets in real time. If an unusual, high-volume surge of bets comes in from specific regions right before a minor event—like a specific referee giving a yellow card in a specific minute—it triggers an automatic investigation into potential spot-fixing rather than a simple refereeing error.

2. Why do wealthy players or teams still get involved in match-fixing?

While top-earning superstars rarely fix games for money, match-fixing among wealthy individuals or clubs is almost always driven by sporting advantage or extortion. Teams may fix late-season matches to secure tournament qualification, avoid costly relegation, or arrange favorable knockout draws. Additionally, organized crime syndicates often target players early in their careers or leverage personal secrets, gambling debts, and threats against family members, trapping even well-paid athletes into complying with fixing demands.

3. How are host countries for major tournaments like the World Cup actually chosen now?



Following the massive 2015 corruption scandal, FIFA replaced its old selection process—which previously relied on a small, vulnerable Executive Committee of around 24 people who were easily targeted for bribes. Today, host selection is decided through an open vote by all 211 member nations in the FIFA Congress. The bidding rules also mandate detailed, published bid evaluations conducted by independent third parties, covering risk assessments, human rights compliance, venue readiness, and strict conflict-of-interest checks.

4. Who watches the people in charge when global organizations like FIFA regulate themselves?

Because international sports federations operate across international borders, traditional government agencies do not have direct authority over their daily internal decisions. However, oversight now relies on a combination of independent internal bodies—such as separate Ethics, Audit, and Compliance Committees staffed by outside experts—and international pressure from law enforcement agencies. When global bodies fail to self-regulate, national legal systems (such as the U.S. Department of Justice or Swiss authorities) step in using international banking laws and anti-racketeering statutes to prosecute corrupt executives.

5. Is technology like VAR helping stop corruption, or is it just creating new ways to manipulate games?

Video Assistant Referee (VAR) technology was introduced to eliminate clear on-pitch errors, but it has added a complex new layer to governance. While goal-line technology and automated offsides leave no room for human bias, subjective decisions—such as handball calls or red-card checks—still depend on human judgment. Critics worry that because VAR operators control which camera angles and slow-motion replays are shown to the main referee, corrupt actors could theoretically use selective footage to influence key moments behind closed doors.

6. How does illegal sports betting affect lower-tier leagues and younger players?

Organized crime syndicates deliberately avoid high-profile matches where security and media attention are intense. Instead, they focus on semi-professional leagues, lower divisions, and youth competitions where players and referees are often underpaid, vulnerable, or lacking proper integrity training. Fixers offer quick cash payouts in exchange for minor actions like conceding a corner or picking up a booking. Because international betting sites allow gambling on virtually any match worldwide, these lower-tier games carry massive financial value for criminal groups.

7. What actually happens to a player, referee, or official when they get caught taking a bribe?

Consequences for taking bribes operate on two distinct levels: sporting sanctions and criminal prosecution. Under football regulations, FIFA's Disciplinary and Ethics codes can issue lifetime bans from all football-related activities worldwide, alongside massive financial fines. Simultaneously, because match-fixing, bribery, and wire fraud violate national laws in most countries, convicted individuals routinely face police arrests, asset seizures, and lengthy prison sentences imposed by government courts.

8. Are whistleblowers who report match-fixing really protected from retaliation?

Protecting whistleblowers remains one of the hardest challenges in sports integrity. Governing bodies have established secure, encrypted online reporting platforms (such as FIFA's "BKMS" portal) that allow individuals to submit evidence anonymously without revealing their identity or digital location. Additionally, new legal agreements



between sports bodies and international organizations like the UN aim to protect whistleblowers from blacklisting, career destruction, or physical safety threats when reporting criminal syndicates.

9. Where does all the money from massive player transfer fees and agent commissions actually go?

With billions of dollars moving globally during transfer windows, tracking money flow requires heavy regulatory oversight. Unregulated transfers historically allowed secret kickbacks, off-the-books payments to unauthorized third parties, and tax evasion through offshore shell companies. To fix this, mandatory digital platforms like the FIFA Transfer Matching System (TMS) require both buying and selling clubs to upload identical banking records, contract documents, and agent payment breakdowns before an international transfer is legally approved.

10. Can normal football fans do anything to push for cleaner governance in the sport?

While individual supporters do not hold voting power inside sports federations, organized fan movements hold significant economic and public influence. Supporters' trusts, official fan groups, and public campaigns frequently pressure corporate sponsors to demand high ethical standards from governing bodies before renewing multi-million-dollar endorsement deals. Fans also drive political accountability by lobbying local governments to enforce strict independent oversight before public taxpayer money is used to fund major stadium bids or tournament infrastructure.

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