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IGC issues final report

Press Release

At the end of December 2013, the Independent Governance Committee (IGC) under the leadership of Prof. Mark Pieth formally completed its task of overseeing the FIFA reform process after more than two years of work.

During this time, the IGC, a group consisting of renowned governance experts and football stakeholders, submitted concrete recommendations for reforms relating to greater transparency, financial controls, accountability and ethical conduct. Several of the IGC's proposals have been implemented and have led to first tangible results; others will be voted on at the next Congress in 2014.

The IGC also assessed FIFA's responses to allegations of past and current misconduct and recommended further investigations, especially regarding the hosting decisions for the World Cup in Qatar.

The final report published today is the last in a series of three reports in which the IGC details the progress of the reforms and the work that remains to be done. Its recommendations for the future include focusing on cultural change within the organization and installing a smaller group of outside experts for continued oversight especially during critical times such as the next elections of the FIFA president or when successors for the independent chairpersons of the Ethics Committee and the Audit & Compliance Committee will be nominated.

During the past two years, the following of the IGC's recommendations were implemented:

- The Ethics Committee has been divided into an investigatory and an adjudicatory chamber with independent outsiders of high professional standing as chairpersons and vice-chairpersons;
- The Ethics Committee has the necessary independence and resources to conduct investigations into past and current misconduct, the investigations can be initiated completely independently from FIFA officials and the FIFA administration;
- The Code of Ethics has been revised so that it addresses existing and potential problems like conflicts of interest and bribery and corruption more clearly;
- A publicly accessible whistleblower hotline has been activated at the beginning of 2013;
- An Audit & Compliance Committee with an independent chair and vice-chairperson has been established with the typical supervisory role of an audit committee and the additional responsibilities for the compliance program as well as for compensation and benefits.

However, several other important reform recommendations that have not been fully implemented yet:

- All members of the Executive Committee and the standing committees should undergo a central integrity check. The IGC was of the opinion that a decentralized integrity check performed by the Confederations would not be consistent enough and would not be up to the necessary standards;
- In order to underline their role and responsibility as members of FIFA's executive body, the members of the Executive Committee should be individually confirmed by Congress upon their appointment or re-appointment by the Confederations;
- The IGC saw it as essential that the Chairman of the Audit & Compliance Committee has access to and can participate as an observer in all Committee meetings within FIFA, including the Executive Committee; this role as an observer should be explicitly defined in FIFA's regulations. In fact, the IGC would have preferred at least 2 independent members to be added to the Executive Committee;
- The IGC emphasized that the introduction of term limits for all FIFA officials (not only the president) is a key component of good governance and should therefore be implemented;
- The IGC supported the view of the Confederations that introducing age limits is less important if terms of office will be implemented;
- The IGC supported a review of key processes and related policies, including the bidding for hosting decisions, the governance of all development projects, presidential campaigns as well as marketing and procurement activities;
- The IGC stressed the importance of transparency in the area of compensation and benefits and recommended the publication of information on a best-practice level compared to multinational corporations or in international organization.

The IGC strongly advises that these recommendations are implemented to lead FIFA to greater accountability and transparency.

The FIFA reform process started in response to persistent allegations of ethical misconduct in the media and the public opinion. Thus, the IGC insisted that the new Ethics Committee should be able to investigate events that occurred before the reform process started. This explicitly includes allegations in relation to World Cup hosting decisions. The IGC specifically recommended the decision to award the World Cup to Qatar as one that required further investigation. If FIFA is to emerge from the scandals of recent years it must now produce a convincing and transparent answer to any issues relating to hosting decisions, either to confirm that the suspicions are, sadly, well founded or to demonstrate that they are groundless. The Ethics Committee should not rest until there is a conclusive answer. And, if allegations are confirmed FIFA must ensure that the consequences are meaningful.

The reforms are necessary and important, however, the reform can only be truly successful if there is cultural change on all levels of the organization. The FIFA member associations have the opportunity to influence the culture of the organization by taking on a more active and independent role in choosing the future FIFA leadership and in shaping the culture of FIFA so that it becomes an organization with good governance practices to ensure the organization's integrity with the ultimate goal of restoring confidence amongst all FIFA stakeholders, including fans and the wider public.