



## Addressing Racism and Discrimination in Football

## Letter from the Executive Board

Dear Delegates,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the simulation of FIFA, the global governing body of football, for this session on the agenda **“Addressing Racism and Discrimination in Football.”**

Football is more than a sport; it is a global institution that brings together players, clubs, associations, officials, and supporters from across the world. Yet despite its unifying nature, the game continues to face serious challenges related to racism, xenophobia, exclusion, and other forms of discrimination. These issues undermine the values of fairness, equality, and respect that football is meant to represent.[publications.fifa+1](#)

This Background Guide has been prepared to help you understand the scope of the issue and the structures already in place to address it. FIFA’s statutes prohibit discrimination of any kind, and FIFA has repeatedly emphasized that racism has no place in football or in society. At the same time, the persistence of discriminatory incidents shows that policy alone is not enough; effective enforcement, education, and institutional cooperation remain essential.[digitalhub.fifa+1](#)

As delegates, you are expected to engage with the agenda in a constructive and solution-oriented manner. Consider not only the punishments and regulations needed to address abuse, but also the preventive work required through education, monitoring, reporting mechanisms, fan engagement, and cooperation between football institutions.

We encourage you to study the issue carefully, think critically about how football governance can respond to discrimination, and contribute to balanced and realistic solutions that protect the integrity of the game.

Should you have any questions about the agenda or committee procedure, please feel free to approach the Executive Board. We look forward to a thoughtful, active, and productive committee.

Regards,

*The Executive Board*

*FIFA Simulation*

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# **The Meaning of Discrimination in Football**

Discrimination in football refers to unfair or abusive treatment of players, officials, club staff, or supporters on the basis of race, skin colour, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, language, or other protected characteristics. FIFA's Statutes state that discrimination of any kind is strictly prohibited and punishable by suspension or expulsion.

In practice, discrimination can appear in many forms, including racist chanting, abusive banners, online harassment, unequal access to opportunities, exclusion from leadership positions, and discriminatory behaviour by fans, officials, or institutional actors. These acts damage the credibility of football institutions and undermine the values of respect and inclusion that the sport is meant to uphold.

## **How Racism Appears in the Game**

Racism in football can appear both on and off the pitch. On matchdays, it may take the form of racist chants, monkey gestures, discriminatory banners, or targeted abuse directed at players and referees. Outside stadiums, racism may take the form of online harassment, media abuse, exclusion from coaching or administrative roles, or discriminatory treatment in youth development systems.

The problem is not limited to isolated incidents; it often reflects deeper social biases that enter football through spectators, institutional practices, and digital spaces. Because football has such a large global audience, racist incidents in the game can spread rapidly and have a broader social impact.

## **FIFA's Regulatory Framework**

FIFA has made anti-discrimination a formal part of its governance framework. Article 4 of the FIFA Statutes prohibits discrimination of any kind and sets out that violations may be punished through suspension or expulsion.[digitalhub.fifa+1](https://www.fifa.com/digitalhub/fifa+1)

In addition, FIFA has introduced a three-step anti-discrimination procedure for discriminatory incidents during matches: the referee first stops the match, then suspends it if the abuse continues, and finally abandons the match if the behaviour does not stop. FIFA also promotes the "No Racism" gesture at competitions as a visible symbol of zero tolerance.

## **Role of Clubs, Leagues, and Associations**

Clubs, leagues, and member associations are essential to anti-racism efforts because they control matchday operations, player protection systems, disciplinary responses, and fan behaviour policies. UEFA's statutes require member associations to implement an effective policy aimed at eradicating racism and discrimination and to enforce strict sanctions where necessary.

Clubs are also expected to educate supporters, cooperate with security and disciplinary bodies, and respond to incidents with transparency. In many cases, the credibility of anti-discrimination policy depends on whether clubs and associations treat racist abuse as a serious sporting and ethical violation rather than simply a public relations issue. UEFA's disciplinary regulations show this clearly by providing for heavy suspensions, fines, stadium closures, and other sanctions when discriminatory conduct occurs.

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## **Enforcement, Sanctions, and Matchday Protocols**

One of the biggest challenges in combating racism is ensuring that rules are actually enforced. Many football bodies have anti-discrimination codes, but the effectiveness of those codes depends on how consistently they are applied. UEFA's three-step protocol is one of the clearest examples of an enforcement system: the match is halted, a warning is issued, and the game may ultimately be abandoned if the abuse persists.

Sanctions can include fines, suspensions, partial or full stadium closures, and bans on supporter attendance. These measures are intended not only to punish misconduct but also to deter future incidents. However, enforcement remains uneven across different competitions, and delegates may wish to discuss how monitoring, reporting, and disciplinary processes can be strengthened.

## **Education, Campaigns, and Prevention**

Punishment alone cannot solve discrimination in football. Long-term change depends on education, awareness campaigns, and leadership at every level of the game. FIFA and UEFA have both promoted anti-racism campaigns and social sustainability policies to reinforce inclusion and respect.

Preventive work can include anti-racism messaging in stadiums, training for referees and stewards, school and youth programmes, and campaigns involving players and clubs as role models. Education is especially important because it addresses the cultural roots of discrimination rather than only the visible symptoms.

## **Support Systems for Players and Officials**

Victims of racism often face psychological stress, professional harm, and social isolation. Football institutions therefore need support systems that allow players, referees, coaches, and staff to report abuse safely and receive protection.

This can include confidential complaint channels, legal assistance, medical and psychological support, and clear procedures for match officials to respond to incidents quickly. A strong support structure also reassures victims that reporting abuse will lead to action rather than retaliation or silence.

## **Building a More Inclusive Football Culture**

A lasting solution requires football to become more inclusive at every level, from youth academies to executive boards. That means improving representation, challenging discriminatory norms, and ensuring that leadership positions reflect the diversity of the football community.

Football organizations can also use their platforms to set standards for respectful behaviour in stadiums, training grounds, media spaces, and online communities. If football is to remain a unifying global sport, its institutions must consistently treat discrimination as incompatible with the spirit of the game.

## **Questions for Delegates to Consider**

Delegates may wish to consider the following questions while preparing speeches and resolutions:

How can football institutions ensure that anti-racism policies are enforced consistently across all competitions?

What balance should be struck between punitive sanctions and preventive education?

How can clubs and associations improve reporting mechanisms for victims of discrimination?

What role should players, referees, and supporters play in promoting inclusion?

How can football bodies respond more effectively to online abuse and digital racism?

What long-term reforms can help build a more equitable football culture?