



UNIVERSALITY AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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ORIGINAL TEXT IN FRENCH

Universality must be both an objective and a philosophy of action in sport and the way it is organised.

• An objective

In a divided and broken world, sport is probably one of the last remaining conveyors of universality.

It connects individuals, people and nations.

It enables people to express a healthy patriotism, which is strengthened by respect for differences and highlights that which brings human beings together rather than that which divides them.

Consequently, sports institutions have the duty to spread the practice of sport in all countries, in all social classes and among both men and women.

• A philosophy of action

Not only must this vision be translated from words into action, but it must be reflected in the internal functioning of sports structures. Democracy, openness to all and a voice for everyone needs to exist at whatever the level of development.

How is this vision of universality applied within the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) to football?

1. AFFILIATION TO FIFA

Now with 208 member federations, universality is virtually complete. Only a few countries or territories are not affiliated to FIFA. Football has 260 million active participants, or around a billion people including their immediate family members.

It is important to remember the extent to which affiliation to FIFA has represented – and continues to represent – a key element of a country's

assertion of independence and national identity. Countries requested affiliation immediately after declaring their independence (India in 1948, African countries in the 1950s and early 1960s, Bangladesh in 1976, Palestine in 1998, etc.).

In the same way, the FIFA statutes guarantee the “one federation – one vote” principle, the representation of all the continents within the technical committees and a strong representation (11 out of 24) of developing countries within its Executive Committee.

2. DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

Without proactive action and voluntarism, universality would remain a hollow concept.

To this end, FIFA has developed ‘universality’ over three phases:

- a) Before 1974 there were only refereeing courses
- b) From 1974 until 1998, under the leadership of João Havelange, football developed as a universal language

His regime coincided with the launch of the first ‘FUTURO’ development course (“Four in one”) in 1975-76. The available funds, generated by the first partnership contracts with Coca-Cola and Adidas, were limited. It amounted, on average, to USD 1.1 million per year.

Thanks to the impact of the World Cup through television, and these development programmes, football became virtually universal.

c) Since 1998

Thanks to all this development work, football became an attractive “product”.

This led to a substantial increase in TV and marketing rights, which enabled FIFA to move up a gear and launch more ambitious development programmes. To this end it was able to provide:

- Direct financial assistance to the member federations;
- Initiate the famous ‘Goal Programme’, supporting the construction of infrastructure, federation headquarters, technical centres, artificial pitches as part of the “Win in Africa with Africa” and other “Win in...” programmes;
- The transfer of increasingly detailed knowledge within football itself (technical, medical and refereeing knowledge) as well as around the game (knowledge of sports management, marketing and university courses in 12 universities across the world, etc.). In other works FIFA carried out a great deal of educational work.

FIFA currently invests around USD 200 million every year in its football and social development programmes, such as “Football for Hope”, and far exceeds the 0.7% target laid down in the Millennium Development Goals.

3. PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL COMPETITIONS

Here also, FIFA works hard to ensure that this universality is translated into practical action and that teams from developing countries can participate in the following competitions:

- World Cups for men and women;



- Confederations Cup;
- U-20 and U-17 World Cups for men and women;
- Club World Cup;
- Men's and Women's Olympic Football Tournaments;
- Beach Soccer and Futsal World Cups.

This support is provided through our financial assistance programme, which helps teams to participate by meeting preparation and travel costs.

We also endeavour to enable countries to play in spite of political conflicts and regional tensions by organising matches on neutral territory (e.g. with Palestine, Chad-Sudan in 2007) and rejecting boycotts (e.g. with Israel), etc.

However, this progress towards universality has not been achieved without disagreement, particularly regarding the number of direct qualification places. Let us not forget that African countries boycotted the 1966 World Cup because of FIFA's refusal to grant it a direct place. This was, however, allowed for the first time at the 1970 World Cup in Mexico.

What a long way we have come since then!

This universality is reflected in the regular increase in the number of football federations involved in FIFA World Cup qualifying competitions:

- 32 teams in 1934;
- 99 in 1974;
- 199 teams for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa!

4. ORGANISATION OF COMPETITIONS AND THE FIFA WORLD CUP

Universality is also achieved by offering developing countries the opportunity to organise FIFA competitions.

Three examples include:

- **The U-20 World Cup, launched in Tunisia in 1977**
17 editions, eight of which were staged in developing countries
- **The U-17 World Cup, launched in the People's Republic of China in 1989**
13 editions, six of which were staged in developing countries
- **The World Cup**
A rotation system was imposed after the vote in July 2000 for the 2006 World Cup, in order to boost the chances of Africa and then South America for the 2010 and 2014 World Cups.

To conclude, I would like to emphasise the importance of the universality of sport in the world today, which is tending more and more towards elitism, egoism and the marginalisation of the weakest.

Of course, sport cannot do everything, nor can it achieve what politicians, states, regional and international organisations are unable to accomplish.

But sport must remain a model that some might be tempted to imitate. It should be a beacon, a light which could guide others.

Universality must continue to be the reflection of our common values and the fraternity of the human race!