

Dear Pertti,

Dear Gianni,

Dear Mr Navracsics,

Dear Mr Rehn,

Dear Presidents of football associations,

Dear friends of football,

Let us not be afraid.

That is the clear, simple and hopeful message that I want to bring you today.

1. Let us not be afraid of change or reforms.

By all means, let us respect the past, our traditions and the decisions of those who have gone before us. But let us not be afraid to move forward and to stand up as a new generation of forward-looking leaders.

[...]

2. Let us not be afraid of taking action and assuming our responsibilities.

UEFA is not an organisation that goes out of its way to grab the headlines. It lets its competitions do the talking. And what competitions they are! The best in the world. We are among those who believe that facts speak louder than words. Let us continue to act in that way. No empty promises; no empty words; no scandals. Let's act. With humility, respect and professionalism.

Like on the pitch, our formula for success will be efficiency, simplicity and a touch of creativity.

[...]

### 3. Let us not be afraid of adapting.

Let us be proactive. That's why we have restructured UEFA, in order to adapt it to the challenges of today and tomorrow. We have set up a new division – dedicated to the protection of the game – to tackle all the evils that threaten our sport: violence, doping, corruption, match-fixing, poor financial management of clubs taking part in our competitions, and ethical and disciplinary problems. We have also set up an intelligence and research centre to anticipate future changes and to ensure that UEFA stays at the cutting edge of all aspects of sports governance. Finally, we have created a football division, where technical development returns to its rightful place, and with a dedicated women's football unit – the first in the history of UEFA.

[...]

### 4. Let us not be afraid of transparency and good governance

The amendments to the statutes that we are proposing today go in this direction. Why should we be afraid to modernise and to keep up with the times? After all, transparency and good governance are not only fashionable; they are praiseworthy and respectable values.

We firmly believe in the amendments to the statutes that are being put to you today and that we hope you will approve. You are already familiar with the proposals, which I presented to you as part of my election manifesto last year:

- Term limits for the UEFA president and members of the Executive Committee.
- Candidates for election or re-election to the UEFA Executive Committee must hold an active office in their respective national associations, so that they are not out of touch with reality but tuned into what is happening on the ground and any problems you face in your associations.
- Better representation of our stakeholders in our official bodies.
- Strengthening of the UEFA Governance and Compliance Committee through the additional appointment of two independent members to the current three-man body.
- Inclusion of a specific article in the UEFA Statutes to ensure that the venues for all UEFA competitions are selected in a fully objective manner through a transparent bidding process. Surprising as it may seem, this was not always the case in the past.
- Inclusion of a specific article in the UEFA Statutes to make ethics and good governance a statutory objective of our organisation.

We realise that these measures are far removed from the concerns of pure football fans, for whom they are obscure changes that are clearly not going to revolutionise the game. We can't say they are wrong. But these changes are essential if we are to rebuild our image, restore our credibility and strengthen our legitimacy. And we firmly believe that it is only by enhancing our credibility and legitimacy that we will have enough respect to bring in all the other necessary reforms.

It is difficult to preach when you are not beyond reproach yourself. These changes are therefore not cosmetic touches but an overhaul of our foundations, on which we can build a better future. This is a necessary step towards greater calm and stability in UEFA.

'Leading by example' has to be more than just a catch-line. It has to be a clear reality in our organisation.

[...]

## 5. Let us not be afraid of what tomorrow holds in store

Together, we will develop a strategic vision for European football. This five-year plan will not be forced on you. It will not come out of the blue as may have happened in the past. It will not be drafted by some anonymous bureaucrat and his paper-pushers hidden away in an office on the shores of Lake Geneva. It will be developed with you and for you. We will initiate discussions very soon so that together we can start designing the football of tomorrow. We will take the time we need. It is your ideas, projects, hopes and aspirations, and those of your clubs, players and supporters, that will be at the heart of this vision.

It's not a question of looking at football as it is today and asking 'Why?' but of dreaming about how it could be and asking 'Why not?'

This will be the start of a long process of reflection on European football, but as you know, every long journey starts with a single step.

[...]

## 6. Let us not be afraid of our stakeholders

The leagues, clubs and players are not our enemies. They are key stakeholders in our game. Partners that we must respect. So why be afraid of dialogue? Why be afraid of telling them face to face how we could shape the future together, hand in hand, in the best interests of football? And why be afraid to tell them openly what we will never accept:

- To some clubs, I shall say it calmly and dispassionately, but firmly and resolutely: there will be no closed league. Quite simply, that is not in line with our values and ideals. It's as simple as that. But we will work together for the good of club football and correct what needs to be put right.
- To some leagues, I shall say it calmly and dispassionately, but firmly and resolutely: we will never give in to the blackmail of those who think they can manipulate small leagues or impose their will on the associations because they think they are all-powerful on account of the astronomical revenues they generate.

Quite simply, money does not rule and the football pyramid must be and will be respected. It's as simple as that. But we will work together for the good of domestic football, to find practical solutions to your problems and to rectify the imbalances as much as possible – problems and imbalances for which you are also partly responsible.

- To a football legend and great leader I like, I respect and I enjoy working with, I shall say it calmly and dispassionately, but firmly and resolutely: clubs are not the only ones that care about football. UEFA, FIFA and the national associations care about football too, today more than ever. I won't lie. Of course we also care about financial aspects, but only to be able to share more with ... well ... with the clubs, and with the national associations in order to develop football everywhere around Europe.

I am convinced that with clubs, leagues and FIFPro we can do great things together. But on condition that you and the organisation you represent are constructive, positive and want to fight for the best interests of European football. Clubs and FIFPro understood it and we are working extremely well together. I hope that one day the EPFL will understand it too. Let us sit around the table together and move forward. Let us show European Commissioner Navracsics that at UEFA, social dialogue is not a dream but a reality.

[...]

## 7. Let us not be afraid to share

In an ever more individualistic society, 'sharing' must not be considered a dirty word. Solidarity is a value that has to be engrained in UEFA's DNA. Presidents of our member associations, I am aware of the financial difficulties that your associations sometimes face. Until very recently, I was in your shoes. That is why I am happy to announce to you today that we have decided to allocate an additional one million euros to each association for the current cycle. This solidarity payment, which is only possible thanks to the excellent financial results of our national-team competitions, will be available immediately and can be used to cover your running expenses or to launch projects that you would like to implement but for which you do not have the necessary funds.

UEFA is not here to accumulate wealth while you struggle to develop football in the furthest reaches of your territories. When the financial results exceed our expectations, as they have done in this cycle, I will propose to redistribute the funds as soon as possible. We will do it for you through our national-team competitions and for the clubs through our club competitions.

[...]

#### 8. Let us not be afraid to revamp financial fair play

Financial fair play, in which I firmly believe, must not be seen merely as a means of austerity. It must be a support mechanism, encouraging greater justice and stability but also greater investment. Financial fair play has been remarkably efficient in reducing club debt considerably. Financial fair play mark two (2.0) should make it possible to continue along that path, while at the same time helping to revive the European football economy.

[...]

#### 9. Let us not be afraid to launch an ambitious new programme of social fair play

What is social fair play? It is everything we can do to bring about a football that is fairer and more ethical.

The scope is wide.

Protecting amateur training clubs comes under social fair play. This will require changes to FIFA's solidarity mechanism, as well as to the transfer system.

Incorporating respect for human rights and workers' rights also comes into social fair play and we are introducing it into our bidding requirements. And this is something we are officially committing to here and now.

Protecting children is another key component of social fair play. Tens of millions of children play football every weekend on our continent. It is our duty to keep them safe. Following the recent exposure of sexual abuse

against minors, we cannot shut our eyes. We are parents. And the victims are not just children. They are OUR children. Through the UEFA Foundation for Children in particular, UEFA will therefore join the fight against abuse and paedophilia in a number of ways that will be announced shortly. The solutions we are exploring include a charter, the establishment of records, training and education for players and coaches, legal aid for victims and lobbying the European institutions regarding statutes of limitation.

Being a social fair play organisation also means being an organisation that does not tolerate racism. Or sexism. Or homophobia. Or discrimination against disabled people.

Here too, I ask you to set an example. Within UEFA and within your respective bodies. We cannot stand up for diversity, gender equality and social inclusion by means of TV spots and good intentions if we ourselves tolerate words and behaviour from another age.

Financial fair play has made competitions fairer and clubs healthier.

Social fair play will make football more open to those who love it and to those who play it, wherever they are, wherever they come from and whoever they may be.

[...]

10. Let us not be afraid to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

- We will successfully launch the Nations League, and also and above all, meet the underestimated challenge of EURO 2020. It is a magnificent project, but some of the difficulties that go with it have been overlooked or played down. Thirteen different hosts, thirteen different legislations, different currencies. The challenge matches our ambitions: it is huge. But we will succeed. When I see the commitment and investment of the different associations involved, I don't doubt it for a second. And it will have an immense symbolic value: it will show a Europe that it is united in its diversity, a Europe that is devoted to the same passion and the same ideal: football.
- We will work with you to increase the number of children who play football in your clubs. Participation – of boys and,

especially, girls – is the key to a successful future. It's a long-term investment that we cannot do without.

- We will ensure that UEFA keeps the cost of tickets for its competitions under control, so that football remains a game of the people.
- And last but not least, we will defend football's values against all the cynics, kill-joys and moralists, and against all those who are embittered, disappointed, disillusioned or disgusted.

With tens of millions of registered players and hundreds of millions of fans, we represent the biggest social movement in Europe. In an uncertain world, in societies beset with doubt, we have responsibilities.

Let football unite people instead of pulling them apart. Let football give people reason to dream. When I think about Iceland in the EURO 2016 quarter-finals and Wales in the semi-finals, when I think about my little Slovenia holding England to a draw in the qualifiers for the 2018 World Cup, when I think about Leicester City in the Champions League quarter-finals and Genk in the Europa League quarter-finals, I have stars in my eyes and tell myself that football is still working its magic and the dream is very much alive.

I am from a region and of a generation that has known war. I know what football represents in terms of symbolic power, hopes and aspirations.

I think it was Eric Cantona who once said: "An artist is someone with the gift to light up a dark room." Footballers are artists. They light up dark rooms in so many homes around the world. They inspire. They delight. They transcend. Quite simply, they bring out pure and intense emotions in us, in a troubled world, a complex and paradoxical world, a world that is more regulated and sanitised than ever, and at the same time ever more inclined towards populism and fear.

I will say it again: let us not be afraid. Together, let us always respect and defend those who bring football alive every day, everywhere: the supporters, the volunteers and the younger generation. Let us never forget that it is for them that we must pursue our projects for the future. That it is our responsibility as leaders.



Let us have the courage of our convictions, our values and our passions. Football is beautiful. Let us dare to protect it together. Let us dare to fight for what we believe to be just.

That is what I wanted to share with you today.

[...]

Before declaring this Congress open, I would like to say one last thing. As we should not be afraid to say thank you either, I would like to say thank you to Alejandro Dominguez, David Chung, Constant Omari and Sunil Gulati, who came especially from Paraguay, Papua New Guinea, Democratic Republic of Congo and the US to attend this Congress.

I would also like to say thank you – in front of all of you – to my dear friend Pertti Alaja. Pertti, thank you to you and your association for the fantastic welcome you have given us here in this lovely city of Helsinki.

Pertti, you are an example to us all. You have dedicated your life to football for more than half a century: as a player – or rather as a goalkeeper, but we don't hold that against you; we also need goalkeepers – as a coach, as a leader, as an administrator, and finally, as president of the Football Association of Finland.

Who knows, perhaps you will follow in the footsteps of your predecessor at the Finnish Football Association and become president of your country one day. If that were to happen, your compatriots would be lucky people. In any case, I would not be afraid for them, as they would be in good hands!

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Thank you again. And I now declare this Congress open!