



# MEDIA RELEASE



09.02.2016

## EUROPEAN CLUBS DISCUSS FOOTBALL GOVERNANCE & UEFA CLUB COMPETITIONS

Representatives from 143 member clubs attended the European Club Association's (ECA) 16th General Assembly in Paris, France.

### ***Football Governance***

ECA reiterates its demand to play an active and constructive role in FIFA's decision-making process moving forward. FIFA must open its doors to key stakeholders, such as clubs, players and leagues, offering them meaningful and direct involvement when it comes to decisions affecting the professional game. As the world governing body, FIFA bears responsibility for the management and development of the game which requires it to take account of the interests of stakeholders beyond its member associations. Not only finances and the collection of votes during elections should determine FIFA's policy: the interest of the game must be put back into the foreground.

Once again ECA expresses its disagreement with the possible increase in the number of teams participating in the World Cup from 32 to 40, as proposed by the FIFA Reform Committee. The clubs acknowledge the importance of national teams for each country and, in particular, the federations. However, the healthy balance between club and national team football must not be put at risk. The burden imposed on players has reached its limits; all football stakeholders must protect the players, the key element of the game, from physical overload. The clubs have a responsibility towards their players and ECA calls on the governing bodies to apply the same sense of responsibility to protect the game. Football stakeholders must not neglect the healthy balance purely out of self-interest.

### **UEFA Club Competitions**

In light of the upcoming 2018-21 UEFA Club Competition Cycle, the clubs are currently discussing the future of UEFA's main club competitions, namely the UEFA Champions League and the UEFA Europa League. As in the past, the clubs are in constant dialogue with UEFA to further develop and improve both competitions. All ECA Member Clubs have gathered in informal working groups to exchange initial thoughts and ideas.

Commenting on the discussions, ECA Chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said:

*"I believe both ECA and UEFA are interested in an evolution of the competitions. Stagnation means regression. We have always jointly looked into ways to further develop and improve the competitions. It is important to find a good and balanced solution for everyone involved."*

### **Key Note Speakers from FIFA and UEFA**

The event saw the participation of FIFA's acting deputy Secretary General, Marco Villiger, and UEFA General Secretary, Gianni Infantino, who both addressed the plenary session updating the clubs on FIFA and UEFA matters respectively. Gianni Infantino also spoke to the clubs in his capacity as FIFA presidential candidate and presented his vision to take FIFA forward: a reformed FIFA built on transparency, robust governance, solidarity and a renewed focus on football development across the globe. His presentation received a warm response from all ECA Member Clubs.

ECA Chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said:

*"The European clubs have a very good and long-lasting relationship with Gianni Infantino. We have achieved a lot together over the past years at UEFA level. In the spirit of football, we support Gianni. We wish him the best of luck and success for the upcoming FIFA elections."*

\* \* \*