



TO THE MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS OF FIFA

Circular no. 1735

Zurich, 1 October 2020
SG

COVID-19: FIFA's Return to Football – International Match Protocol; temporary amendments to the Regulations for the FIFA World Cup 2022™ Preliminary Competition and Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players

Dear Sir or Madam,

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an unprecedented challenge for world football, causing widespread disruption and delays to competitions globally. In recent weeks and months, however, the implementation of protocols regarding the return to football has resulted in the successful resumption of domestic club football, continental club football and, most recently, international football.

These protocols and resumptions have set an example and offered a beacon of hope to the general public in terms of how aspects of our daily lives can return to normal with the correct planning and by exercising the appropriate level of caution. They have also provided the necessary assurance to governments and local authorities to enable exceptional treatment of international sport when setting policies concerning international travel restrictions and quarantine.

In keeping with this momentum, and in order to facilitate the return of competitive international football at global level, the Bureau of the FIFA Council has today taken several important decisions related to the upcoming international windows.

1) *FIFA's Return to Football – International Match Protocol*

FIFA's Return to Football – International Match Protocol (**FIFA Protocol**) has been developed in consultation with representatives from confederations and stakeholders and reflects the latest knowledge compiled by relevant experts and, where possible, the feedback shared by confederations and stakeholders.

The FIFA Protocol defines a comprehensive set of COVID-19 preventative measures that are to be implemented in the footprint of matches and at official sites. It incorporates the latest recommendations issued by the World Health Organization and covers areas such as risk assessment, monitoring and testing, physical distancing, contact tracing, specific hygiene regimes and resource planning.

The FIFA Protocol provides important safeguards for the health and safety of players and delegates while simultaneously facilitating a return to play and the provision of travel and quarantine exemptions by local authorities, where relevant.

The FIFA Protocol allows for the use of equivalent protocols, such as those that have already been developed and successfully implemented by confederations in international matches to date.

The content and application of the FIFA Protocol or the equivalent confederation protocol are mandatory for all international matches within a window of the International Match Calendar.

A dedicated FIFA team has also been established, whose responsibility is to provide hands-on assistance and support to match organisers in the implementation of the FIFA Protocol now and going forward. This will include delivering explanatory and educational sessions and sharing answers to frequently asked questions. This team will also be responsible for monitoring the developments in terms of best practice and standards in this area, including specifically with regard to medical testing and hygiene programmes, and proposing updates to the FIFA Protocol if and when required.

The FIFA team will be actively reaching out to match organisers whose scheduled upcoming matches are covered by the scope of the FIFA Protocol.

FIFA remains fully available at any time to answer any questions, provide clarifications or receive feedback. Please feel free to direct any such queries or comments on FIFA's Return to Football – International Match Protocol to Jaime Yarza, Director Tournaments, at qualifiers@fifa.org.

2) Regulations for the FIFA World Cup 2022™ Preliminary Competition

The FIFA Protocol will be implemented for the qualifying matches for the FIFA World Cup 2022™ until such time as the global situation normalises. Accordingly, the Bureau of the FIFA Council has amended the Regulations for the FIFA World Cup 2022™ Preliminary Competition for the remainder of the 2020 calendar year.

Participating teams' entitlement to use up to five substitutes during matches played under the scope of these regulations has also been included, in accordance with the temporary amendment to Law 3 – The Players approved by The International Football Association Board.

The revised Regulations for the FIFA World Cup 2022™ Preliminary Competition are enclosed.

3) Temporary amendments to the Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players

The Bureau of the FIFA Council has approved several temporary amendments to the Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players (**RSTP**).

In making this decision, the Bureau took into consideration the development of the FIFA Protocol and the role that it will play in the mitigation of risks related to the contraction and spread of COVID-19 during international windows. It also took into account the fact that the FIFA Protocol effectively addresses the standard recommendations based on the risks that may apply to ordinary travellers.

Lastly, the Bureau considered the critical role that protocols such as this play in obtaining the required exemptions from authorities for sportspersons travelling internationally for the purpose of matches with their national teams. With this in mind, FIFA strongly encourages all member associations to actively

engage with their local authorities and, where needed, together with FIFA and the relevant confederation, to facilitate the provision of specific exemptions to quarantine or self-isolation measures that will enable the release of players participating in international matches, as well as their safe arrival and return.

In light of this, the following amendments regarding the operation of the RSTP have been made:

1.
These temporary amendments shall apply to all international windows for men's football, women's football, and futsal scheduled for the remainder of 2020.
2.
All international matches taking place in those windows are required to apply FIFA's Return to Football – International Match Protocol or an equivalent protocol of the relevant confederation compliant with the said Protocol.
3.
The rules relating to release of players to association teams, as provided for in Annexe 1, apply as normal, except where:
 - i. there is a mandatory period of quarantine or self-isolation of at least five (5) days upon arrival in:*
 - a. the location of the club which has an obligation to release the player to an association team; or*
 - b. the location where a representative team match is scheduled to take place; or*
 - ii. there is a travel restriction to or from either location (a. or b. above); and*
 - iii. a specific exemption from the relevant authorities relating to the above decisions has not been granted to players of a representative team.*

For the avoidance of doubt, the terms “*mandatory period of quarantine or self-isolation*” and “*travel restriction*” refer to measures implemented by a government health authority at the relevant “*location*” cited in article 3 paragraph i).

The updated RSTP will be available for download from legal.fifa.com in due course.

Should you require any clarifications, please contact James Kitching, Director Football Regulatory, at james.kitching@fifa.org and psdfifa@fifa.org.

Following these important decisions, FIFA would like to acknowledge that the challenge faced by world football in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic is far from behind us and there understandably remains a degree of uncertainty globally. In light of this, and in advance of the upcoming international windows, FIFA strongly urges all member associations, clubs and players to work together in a spirit of cooperation and solidarity to share information and find appropriate solutions under the regulatory framework that has now been temporarily adapted for the balanced benefit of all parties.

FIFA, together with the member associations and confederations, has been monitoring the situation across the world – including the specific current status of travel restrictions and quarantine or self-isolation requirements at all member associations – and remains at the full disposal of all parties should they require any sort of clarification in this regard.

Yours faithfully,

FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE
DE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



Fatma Samoura
Secretary General

Cc

- FIFA Council
- Confederations
- European Club Association
- World Leagues Forum
- FIFPRO

Enclosed

- FIFA's Return to Football – International Match Protocol
- Revised Regulations for the FIFA World Cup 2022™ Preliminary Competition