



**MINISTRY: SPORT, ARTS AND CULTURE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF SPORT, ARTS AND
CULTURE, HON. GOODENOUGH KODWA ON THE
OCCASION OF THE FIFPRO GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 21
NOVEMBER 2023, CAPE TOWN**

Programme Director

President and Leadership of FIFPRO

Esteemed delegates

Distinguished guests

Members of Media

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning

I would like to thank the organisers of this General Assembly for extending the invitation to my office. I am truly honoured to be part of this important gathering that is set to align and reflect on work done to help players over the past 12 months. As a Minister looking after Sport, Arts and Culture, I am looking forward to learning from the engagements of the next three days.

I am a strong believer in recognising and appreciating people's contributions, giving them their flowers when they can still smell



them. As human beings, we want to be validated. I was therefore happy when I became aware that this year's FIFPRO General Assembly will also have a recognition ceremony for outgoing officials and players who have made positive impact in their communities. Keep on doing this great work. To the outgoing General Secretary, Jonas Baer-Hoffmann, all the best after your 11 years of service to FIFPRO.

FIFPRO as a trade union, aims to unite the voice of professional footballers and their national unions to ensure that they are represented internationally in the decisions affecting their profession. It aims to improve players' working environments and wellbeing. It is my conviction therefore that there is room to look at the current wellbeing and beyond playing careers of its members.

One of my focuses as South Africa's Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture, has been to prioritise grassroots sports development and women's sport.

As the South African Government, we have provided support to sport federations such as the South African Football Association (SAFA) towards developing and professionalising women's sport.



We are also building sports facilities and providing sport equipment to schools in rural and under-serviced communities. This is our intervention as Government to unearth talent from a young age, to develop coaching and teaching, and to build an active nation.

We are also integrating a national school sport programme, working together with stakeholders in sport and education to ensure that sport is included in the school curriculum.

We have seen how this has elevated sport in countries such as the United States, France, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Jamaica. These countries have strong grassroots sports development programmes and have sport as an important contributor to the economy. It is important therefore that all role-players take part in maximising on the economy of football.

One of my major concerns is what happens to footballers when they retire from playing. Football is a relatively short career, with most players retiring at around the ages of 34 to 36 years. What do players do after this?

The post-playing careers of football players and athletes generally, can vary widely, as individuals pursue different paths based on their interests, skills, and opportunities. What is important is that whilst at the peak of their careers, athletes also must explore their exit strategies.



The only muscle that has a potential to mature with your age is the brain. At an early age our young athletes must learn to stimulate their minds in tandem with their physical gifts. This will ensure better career decisions and better quality of life both during and after football.

It is therefore imperative that athletes learn the business of football so they can participate in the industry and its supporting echo systems whilst still active in their playing careers. For instance, the following are possibilities,

Many former players transition into **coaching or management** roles within the world of football. They may become youth coaches, assistant coaches, or even head coaches at various levels. Some also take on administrative roles within football clubs or organizations.

Several retired football players find success in the media industry. They become **analysts or commentators** for television and radio broadcasts, providing insights and commentary on games and events. Some also contribute to print or online publications as sports writers, bloggers, or content creators, sharing their perspectives and experiences in written form.



A few players venture into **entrepreneurship**, starting their own businesses or investing in various ventures. This could include opening restaurants, fashion lines, fitness centers, or other business opportunities.

Successful players often become **ambassadors or representatives** for football clubs, brands, or charitable organizations. They may use their status and influence to promote initiatives, charitable causes, or sponsorships.

Former players may work in **administrative roles** within football associations, governing bodies, or sports organizations. This can involve roles in player relations, event management, or sports development.

A number of retired players become motivational speakers, sharing their stories and experiences to inspire others. They may speak at events, conferences, or engage with youth in educational settings.

Some former players transition into **scouting and recruitment** roles, using their expertise to identify and assess talent for football clubs or academies.



It's important to note that not all players follow a linear path, and many may combine elements from several of the above options. Additionally, some players may face challenges during the transition from a playing career to a post-playing career, and there is an increasing recognition of the importance of supporting athletes in this transition phase.

This is where the role of FIFPRO becomes important. Your members need to be empowered; therefore, capacity building should be high in your list of priorities. It should not be by coincidence rather it must be a deliberate and guided process.

We have seen examples of some top clubs around the world bringing in former players to their coaching and management structures. This is how we have seen former players emerge as top coaches. Yet, many players retire and have no where to turn to.

The world's top football teams have found a way to incorporate former players into careers beyond their active playing years. Clubs such as Ajax Amsterdam, Manchester United, FC Barcelona, Real Madrid and Bayern Munich have appointed former players to coaching positions from grassroots to senior levels, and in positions such as team and general manager.



These clubs also make use of former players as club ambassadors, giving them opportunities to further get an income when their playing days are over.

We need to find ways for former players, especially those outside the capital centres of football in Europe and Asia, to make a living and to contribute to the sport when their playing careers are over.

Football Players Unions have played an important role in helping to address this, and greater support from the broader football community and commercial partners is needed.

In conclusion, I am concerned about the continuing racism in football.

Players, coaches, officials, and fans continue to be abused because of the colour of their skin. Despite interventions by football authorities, this abuse is continuing, meaning more should be done.

Kick It Out, the organisation dedicated to stamping out discrimination in football, says that in the 2022 – 2023 season, it received one thousand and seven (1 007) reports of discriminatory behaviour in football from grassroots level, professional level, and across social media. This is a 65 percent



increase in incidents reported to the organisation in the 2021 – 2022 season.

Kick It Out says that racism is the most reported form of discrimination reported, accounting for nearly half (49 percent) of all cases reported.

Kick It Out also observed increasing reports of online abuse. FIFA reports that during the 2022 Men's World Cup, almost 20 000 abusive social media posts were aimed at players, coaches, and officials.

Kick It Out has also observed increasing reports of sexist behaviour or misogyny.

An example of the relentlessness of racism in football can be seen in the experiences of Brazil and Real Madrid striker, Vinicius Junior. In Spain, 23-year-old Vinicius has been subjected to racist abuse from some fans in matches. There has been an effigy of him hung in public, while he has also been victim to vicious online abuse. These attacks come as Vinicius makes his name as one of the world's top footballers.



Racism affects football at all levels. Players and officials – young and old – face the worst racist attacks, yet many feel alone in this battle.

As FIFPRO, you must think about how you can contribute to uprooting this evil behaviour. If anything, Sport should contribute towards Social Cohesion instead of being a source of division.

I wish you well and productive engagements in the next two days.

Thank you.

