

Emma McClarkin MEP condemns lack of accountability of FIFA candidates

Following the cancellation of a high level forum of FIFA presidential candidates which was due to take place in the European Parliament, East Midlands MEP Emma McClarkin has spoken out about the lack of credibility of the majority of FIFA candidates standing for election in February's FIFA Presidential election.

The event, entitled "The Future of FIFA – Presidential Candidates Forum" was billed as an opportunity for candidates to present their manifestos to the press, stakeholders and the public. Instead, Prince Ali bin Al Hussein from Jordan and Tokyo Sexwale from South Africa called a halt to proceedings only two days before the event was due to take place. Worldwide media broadcasters have been forced to ditch the event at the last minute as a result, meaning that once again football fans around the world have been denied the opportunity of listening and engaging in a public debate about the future of FIFA.

Miss McClarkin, who has an interest in sports governance through her work in the European Parliament, was extremely disappointed. She said:

"We offered the candidates a platform to address how they would reform FIFA. It was a chance to show their willingness for FIFA to become transparent and accountable.

"I belong to the campaign group 'New FIFA Now' which advocates for a more democratic, accountable and transparent FIFA. Sadly these principles have been lacking within the organisation for a number of years, and with these candidates looking to take over, I'm afraid the future looks bleak."

She added:

“It’s not even clear now why they did this. Salman Bin Ibrahim Al-Khalifa, widely considered as the front runner, didn’t engage with the event from the beginning. The others signed up to it and we had everything in place. Then, yesterday morning, Prince Ali pulled out citing reasons of electoral campaign rules as the reason he couldn’t attend, despite the fact that Domenico Scala of the Ad Hoc Electoral Committee confirmed that participation in this event would be up to the candidates themselves. It was then only a matter of time before everything fell apart.

“It’s the fans I feel sorry for. They could have been forgiven for thinking that after Blatter stepped down there was light at the end of the tunnel. Instead we will continue to have to endure FIFA Presidential campaigns that are shrouded in secrecy, the result of which is a President that has secured the most dodgy backroom deals. It doesn’t bode well for the organisation. FIFAs motto is ‘For the Game. For the World’ – I beg to differ.”

Emma is now hosting a press conference alongside Jerome Champagne, the one candidate who committed himself to the event, as well as MEPs, stakeholders and a former professional football player.