

Mutko Voices Anger Over World Cup 'Collusion'

November 30, 2010



Bid chief executive Alexei Sorokin, left, and bid chairman Mutko addressing a news conference Tuesday in Zurich. **Arnd Wiegmann**

ZURICH, Switzerland — Russia will not take part in any horse trading for votes as it bids for the right to stage the 2018 World Cup, sports minister and bid chairman Vitaly Mutko said Tuesday.

In a feisty performance at a news briefing two days before FIFA decides on the hosts for the 2018 and 2022 tournaments, Mutko, a FIFA executive committee member who will vote on the outcome, distanced himself from any alliance or collusion between nations to swap votes.

He refused to confirm that Prime Minister Vladimir Putin would be part of Russia's final presentation team in Zurich ahead of FIFA's decisions on the two finals Thursday.

"He will speak for himself," Mutko said. Asked whether he would speak from Moscow or Zurich, he replied: "I cannot answer that question, but it will not be a question tomorrow."

He was more forthcoming when asked about potential collusion, saying any agreements to trade votes would be unjust.

A recent ethics committee report found no evidence of illegitimate collusion between Spain/Portugal, which are bidding for the 2018 finals against Russia, England and Belgium/Netherlands, and Qatar, which are bidding for 2022.

But the subject remains a hot topic of conversation in Zurich, where world football's power brokers are gathering ahead of Thursday's vote, and FIFA president Sepp Blatter said earlier this month that collusion was inevitable with two World Cups being awarded at the same time.

"Russia has presented its bid and has not entered into any collusion or agreement with anyone," Mutko said. "Our bid is clean and honest.

"We do not support the idea of any alliance or collusion. We would prefer these alliances not to happen, and Russia would be very concerned about possible alliances.

"If some countries who have not made much effort to promote their bid suddenly become favorites, then that situation is not just."

Mutko downplayed a report by consultants McKinsey into the potential revenue each country could expect to make for FIFA by hosting the finals.

The report, which will be studied by the executive committee Wednesday, placed England at the top of the 2018 bidders, estimating that it would meet FIFA's target figure, while Russia finished lowest of the four bidders with a revenue estimate of 86 percent of the target.

"The report says that Russia is perfectly capable of hosting the World Cup and is based on what could happen now and not in eight years' time," Mutko added.

Mutko also emphasized the impact Putin had had on Russia's bid, saying the most "direct support" for the bid had come from the prime minister.

"He is involved in our bid daily," he said. "This morning we have already discussed issues concerning our bid, and there are three additional guarantees: the stadium construction guarantees, free travel between host cities where the matches will take place and visa-free entry for all fans in possession of a ticket. As far as our bid is concerned, we have done everything we can."

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2010/11/30/mutko-voices-anger-over-world-cup-collusion-a3369>