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Ukraine Takes War With Russia to FIFA and the Football Field

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Russia's Aleksandr Kokorin (C) fights for the ball against Liechtenstein's Ivan Quintans (L) and Seyhan Yildiz during their Euro 2016 Group G qualifying soccer match at the Arena Khimki outside Moscow.

Ukraine's football federation (FFU) has appealed to FIFA and UEFA to impose the strongest possible sanctions on its Russian counterpart for what it describes as gross violation of football regulations.

The appeal followed the Russian Football Union's (RFU) decision to allow Crimean clubs to compete in its domestic competitions following political problems in the region.

Ukraine expressed its position in an open letter on the federation's website on Thursday shortly after FIFA, UEFA, Ukrainian and Russian representatives met in Nyon, Switzerland.

UEFA said the talks had been "very constructive and ordered" and that the parties had agreed to form a working group to find a solution.

"We had a meeting with representatives of the Russia and Ukraine federations, it was a very

constructive, ordered discussion with goodwill shown from both sides," UEFA secretary general Gianni Infantino told reporters at UEFA headquarters in Nyon.

"What Michel Platini and UEFA has accomplished here is very significant.

"A working group will be established including all parties - UEFA and the two associations — and we feel, especially after the meeting today, that a solution will be found which will allow football to be played in Crimea, but in a manner which is consistent with the statutes of UEFA as well."

The FFU remained positive.

"Football Federation of Ukraine is asking FIFA and UEFA as the highest football authorities to apply sanctions appropriate to a gross violation of the FIFA regulations by the Russian Football Union," it said in a statement.

"(This is) manifested in the illegal affiliation of some Crimean clubs and the peninsula's football federations and (by) staging matches on the territory of Ukraine without permission of the Football Federation of Ukraine."

Infantino said he was not aware of the statement.

"It was a constructive meeting and that's why we were all confident," he said.

"It was not the case that people were shouting at each other, both parties were ready to discuss together a way of finding a solution."

Ukraine insists Russia has no right to include the Crimean clubs in its leagues as the peninsula is officially regarded as an occupied territory and its separation has not been recognized globally.

Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimea peninsula in March, shortly after Ukrainian protesters toppled pro-Moscow President Viktor Yanukovych.

The RFU's executive committee decided to include three Crimean clubs teams in the southern zone of its second division, the country's third tier, after renaming them TSK Simferopol, SKChF Sevastopol and Zhemchuzhina Yalta.

According to FIFA regulations, football leagues or clubs may be affiliated by other associations and play on their territory in exceptional situations and with the consent of all sides.

The FFU did not give its consent for any Crimean clubs to join the Russian league.

UEFA has ruled that it will not recognize the results of the three clubs.

Infantino said that meant that if a team won the Russian Cup, having beaten one of the Crimean sides on the way, they would not be admitted to the Europa League.

"Give us a bit of time. Our task is to see that the population of Ukraine can play football," he added.

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