

Russian Sports Minister Praises Sepp Blatter's Decision to Quit as FIFA Head

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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FIFA President Sepp Blatter arrives for a news conference at the Club World Cup soccer tournament in Marrakech, in this December 19, 2013 file photo.

Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko has described Sepp Blatter's decision to step down as FIFA president as "courageous" and said it would help prevent a split within soccer's governing body, RIA news agency reported.

Blatter, 79, announced his decision to quit at a hastily arranged news conference in Zurich, six days after the FBI raided a hotel in Zurich and arrested several FIFA officials and just four days after he was re-elected to a fifth term as president.

He said an election to choose a new president for the deeply troubled organization would be held as soon as possible. A FIFA official said that could happen any time from December this year to March of next year.

Russian President Vladimir Putin had backed Blatter and accused the United States of meddling outside its jurisdiction in seeking the arrest of top officials from FIFA.

"For the soccer family this decision is unexpected, but it is his decision, a courageous decision, with love for FIFA," Mutko said Tuesday. "It was taken under pressure applied before the congress. Under such pressure, with such an approach, changes would have led to nothing."

Russia is to hold the 2018 soccer World Cup, a competition it was granted the right to hold under Blatter's tenure.

Mutko added: "The decision to resign will help to prevent a split in the organization, to unite soccer and finish the reforms that were started, as well as to launch new ones."

The Kremlin's official spokesman declined comment on Tuesday on Blatter's resignation.

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