

**ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT WAYNE FORDE AT GFF AWARDS CEREMONY HELD AT  
THE SLEEPIN INTERNATIONAL HOTEL & CASINO**

May 11, 2018

**Distinguished Guests,**

**Colleagues,**

**Friends,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is with much pleasure that the Executive Committee of the Guyana Football Federation and I welcome you to this dinner and awards ceremony. We are truly honoured by your presence and look forward to a splendid evening in your company.

The Federation is now in its 116<sup>th</sup> year, and on this special occasion, may I ask you all to stand and join me in a resounding applaud, in celebration of this remarkable journey.

Tonight, we recommit the timeless tradition of gratitude, which seems to have been forgotten for far too long. Tonight, we pause for a moment to simply say, thank you, we appreciate your service, we recognize your contributions and we value the sacrifices each of you are called to make every day for Football.

My Administration's priorities during the past two and a half years have been deliberately focused on stabilizing the football fraternity, unifying the football family, rebuilding the image of the sport and, establishing a clear vision for the game. We remain ever committed to building the widest possible consensus on how the game should be developed in its entirety. We need "all hands on deck."

The examples of this is clear for everyone to see, the vast number of former national footballers currently within our employ, the international support groups that are volunteering within the national team programmes and our strategic investment partners that are providing critical funding and other forms of important support for our competitions are all part of a new and expanding football community that continues to engage the Sport meaningfully.

We will continue to invest the time and resources needed to deepen the special relationships we have with each member of our fraternity and create spaces and opportunities for trust to thrive.

Only recently Guyana was returned to full compliance and restoration of FIFA's funding support for our development programmes, bringing a welcomed end to two very difficult years for the football family. We have set in motion, the necessary financial structures and systems that will mitigate the possibility of sanctions in the foreseeable future.

Much of extraordinary work what we were able to do during this period, was only possible because of the goodwill of our suppliers and partners. This however was not without casualty,

long-held friendship have been threatened and some may have been lost. We have placed the settlement of our total liability as the foremost priority for the second quarter for this year.

FIFA has changed and we must change as well, never again must we allow this situation to besiege the future of our boys and girls.

The power of Football to shape the lives of young people is undeniable and sufficiently proven. The beautiful game has the unique power to attract, mobilize and inspire young boys and girls from every corner of our society. The value of sports in general as a platform for adolescent learning, in particular the development of social competencies and life skills such as self-discipline, mental health, leadership and positive decision-making is an untapped resource that can change Guyana.

By its very nature, sport is about participation. It is about inclusion and citizenship. It stands for human values such as respect for the opponent, acceptance of binding rules, teamwork and fairness, all of which are principles which are also contained in the Charter of the United Nations.

There are approximately 2,160 organized football players throughout the length and breadth of the nine Regional Member Associations (RMA) accredited by the GFF. Of this total, 325 youth players are registered within the GFF-Scotiabank Academy Training Centre (ATC) programme across Guyana. Over the next 3-5 years, we aim to increase the number of young people playing football in Guyana by 500%. Through football these youths have tangible opportunities to strengthen their resilience to negative peer pressure and to build strong self-confidence in their abilities both on and off the field of play.

The young men and women that will be honoured here today, are all fine examples of what it means to get it right. We wish them well in all their pursuits.

At present, each RMA is benefitting from the generous and pioneering investment of the National Milling Company. NAMILCO has made a five-year contractual commitment of thirty million dollars toward the Nation's first Intra-Association GFF-Flour Power Under 17 Boys League.

Similarly, each RMA is benefitting from a total committed investment of twenty-five million dollars, compliments of the Pele Alumni group who has sponsored the Nation's first Intra-Association GFF-Frank Watson Under 15 Boys League.

In the coming months, we will triple our investment in competitions, and support at the level of the RMA. Each member will receive funding, material and technical support for their Senior Men and Women divisional league, Under-15 development girls league, Under 13, 15 & 17 Boys league and an under 20 Men's league respectively.

These competitions were designed to feed Guyana's first National Academy Training Centre programme. The ATC programme continues to evolve and produce the players that will take Guyana into the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

The GFF is currently streamlining its partnership agreements for the launch of a National Primary School competition and a National Secondary School league. These school competitions will serve to expand our player population and bring us closer to the targeted hour of deliberate training and playing, which will positively impact our efforts to identify talent in its infancy stage.

The hinterland communities are receiving greater support from the GFF through competitions and technical training for coaches, referees and administrators. Our National youth teams are finally reflecting the diversity of our peoples. In August of this year, FIFA's Regional Director Mr. Veron Mosengo-Omba, will visit the North Pakaraima Region to witness a Football Competition. He will be accompanied by a FIFA documentary team that will capture the majestic beauty of Guyana's rain forest and the unique challenges to develop the game within the hinterland.

Each RMA must meet their obligation to the players by organizing the competitions assigned to their association as the second Key Success Factor states in our Strategic Plan (2017-2021).

In a matter of days the world will fix its gaze on the greatest sporting event of all times, the FIFA World Cup. How fitting it is that we have already begun to lay the building blocks for Guyana's 2026 FIFA World Cup qualification.

However, for Guyana to qualify for the 2026 World Cup, we need a national alliance of all stakeholder to invest the time and resources necessary to prepare the Nation's team. Each citizen, every business, every member of our Fraternity, the Government of Guyana, the international community, all coming together to be a part of this exciting journey.

The GFF will direct its investments towards eight key development pillars, which will stimulate the National Football culture necessary for the 2026 Campaign:

1. COACHING EDUCATION - We must double our investment in Coaching education and with strong emphasis on early exposure for our Elite Coaches.
2. GROUNDS & FACILITIES – We must work with the GOG and other international stakeholders to develop grounds on a National scale. Too many football venues are without the basic facilities needed to accommodate female participation.
3. GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL - We must consolidate our investment in Grassroots football development in order to create an environment where more boys and girls will have an equal opportunity to play in more places, more often. This will enable early talent spotting.
4. SCHOOL FOOTBALL - We must implement a National Primary and Secondary School Football programme, which will include league competitions along with other smaller

versions of the game. These competition are essential for the expansion of Guyana's player population.

5. CLUBE FOOTBALL - We must increase our investment in a Nationwide Boys and Girls Club Competition programme, U13, 15, 17 and 20. Clubs are the corner stone of any notion football ambition and must be give the necessary support to develop their players.
6. INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL - We must afford our players the earliest possible international exposure through regional competitions and friendlies. This will build the mental resilience necessary to compete at the Regional level.
7. ELITE ATC - We must expand the Elite Scotia Bank Academy Training Centre (ATC) programme across Guyana. The GFF will be establishing 13 additional sites which will take the total number of ATCs to 26.
8. GROW THE FOOTBALL BRAND – We have to reconnect the game with the communities and reconnect the communities with the Clubs. The important undertaking must involve the communities and all stakeholders.

To positively shift the course of Football, each member must lift the standard of their administration and develop initiatives and programmes that extend beyond the field of play.

Corporate Guyana must seek to build stronger relationship with the football fraternity and utilize their know-how to stimulate the much needed changes in attitudes we all wish to see. We can all play an important role in encouraging the emerging culture of transparency and accountability by setting clear and definitive rules of engagement.

The Government of Guyana must utilize every opportunity to maximize the Football platform to influence the reversal of the many social challenges that prey on the future of our players. Football can reduce crime, it can slow the spread of HIV, it can stimulate healthy lifestyles, it can promote tolerance, it can bring communities and people together, it can engender hope among the hopeless.

I wish you all an enjoyable evening, let the dream begin ... FIFA 2026.

Thank you.