

Keynotes Mario Semedo, FIFA Congress 2015

Ladies and gentlemen,

Most of you will have no idea who I am, and yet for a long time I was one of you. I am Mario Semedo, former President of the Cape Verdean Football Federation and a member of the very active FIFA Development Committee, chaired by Issa Hayatou. As I am no longer a president, I will not be voting today, so instead I will say a few words ... or, rather, bear witness.

After 16 years as head of the Cape Verdean Football Federation, I faced a difficult decision and chose to step down as President. However, I will never step away from football.

After 16 years, I leave with the sentiment of a job well done. When I took charge of the federation, the national team were placed 179th in the world ranking. Today, Cape Verde sit proudly in 37th position, as the sixth strongest nation in Africa.

Because of that, I have to pay homage to those who have contributed to the continuing development of football in Cape Verde, with FIFA occupying first place on the list.

Thanks to FIFA's development policy, Cape Verde now possesses two active training centres and a third nearing completion. Meanwhile, I note with satisfaction that after having no grass pitches in 1998, Cape Verde now has 25, five of which were financed by FIFA.

Thanks to the impetus of the international federation, its financial assistance, the projects we have been allocated, plus the training and expertise – all under the leadership of President Blatter – we have been able to secure funding from the government and other bodies who would never have contributed to our development in the past. We have been able to invest in our youth, in all those young people who dream of being able to play football.

The results have been obvious on the pitch. I had the pleasure of ending my presidency on a wonderful note by seeing our national team qualify for their first ever Africa Cup of Nations, and come closer than ever to sealing a place in the greatest football competition of them all – the World Cup.

For perhaps the last time, I would therefore like to speak on behalf of the whole of Cape Verdean football and address a big thank you to FIFA; its President, Joseph Blatter; and the entire administration overseen by Jérôme Valcke.