

FIFA allows anti-discrimination armbands at Women's World Cup

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A combination mock-up picture shows the armbands that FIFA says team captains will be permitted to wear during the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, in this undated handout image released June 30, 2023 [FIFA via Reuters]

Paris, July 1 (RHC)-- Captains of national football teams at the Women's World Cup will be permitted to wear armbands with messages about inclusion, gender equality and peace, the sport's governing body FIFA has announced.

Team skippers will have the choice of eight different topics as part of FIFA's "Football Unites the World" campaign, selected in consultation with the 32 participating teams, players and United Nations agencies.

"Football unites the world and our global events, such as the FIFA Women's World Cup, have a unique power to bring people together and provide joy, excitement and passion," FIFA President Gianni Infantino said in a statement.

"After some very open talks with stakeholders, including member associations and players, we have decided to highlight a series of social causes – from inclusion to gender equality, from peace to ending hunger, from education to tackling domestic violence – during all 64 matches at the FIFA Women's World Cup."

Seven of the armbands are "Unite for" either "Inclusion," which features a heart in a rainbow of colours, "Indigenous People," "Gender Equality," "Education for All," "End Violence Against Women," "Peace," and "Zero Hunger." An eighth armband is "Football is Joy, Peace, Hope, Love, Passion."

The armbands were developed over months of talks with national federations as FIFA aimed to avoid repeating the chaotic standoff with European players and officials last year that spilled into the first two days of games at the men's World Cup in Qatar.

Men's team captains from England, Wales, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany and Denmark had planned to wear "OneLove" rainbow armbands. In a joint statement, however, the federations from those countries said that FIFA had threatened to issue yellow cards to any player wearing it.

FIFA President Infantino said in March that FIFA had learned from the "OneLove" armband fiasco, and promised a solution for the women's global tournament which kicks off July 20 in Australia and New Zealand and is expected to be followed by more than two billion people globally.

Captains have three options, FIFA said. They can wear the "Football Unites the World" armband, an armband corresponding to the theme of their choice for the entire tournament, or the armband corresponding to the theme of the specific match day.

Following the announcement, Germany captain Alexandra Popp welcomed FIFA's decision. "We can also see ourselves well in the themes for the captain's armband that have now been defined, these also reflect our values," Popp said in a statement issued by the German Football Federation.

"FIFA informed us about the different options and involved us in this process. It was a good exchange."

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