

Media Release

**WORLD
LEAGUES
FORUM**

Women's professional leagues establish the "Women's Leagues Forum" as a global platform to work together and represent them

World Leagues Forum
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Switzerland

San Diego, November 10, 2023 – In a landmark moment for women's football, the World Leagues Forum is proud to announce the establishment of the "Women's Leagues Forum", a ground-breaking initiative that will empower and unite professional women's football leagues from around the globe.

The Women's Leagues Forum, which held its second annual meeting in San Diego today, is a pivotal addition to the World Leagues Forum, an organization established in 2017 and representing around 45 men's professional leagues. The Women's Leagues Forum will be uniting women's national leagues from around the world.

The Women's Leagues Forum already connects 16 bodies responsible for their women's national football league. These leagues are either independent professional structures (USA, Sweden, Spain, Japan, Norway) or structures integrated with the men's professional league (Australia, Mexico, Scotland, Belgium, Costa Rica, Panama). Considering the rapidly evolving landscape of women's football, several federations responsible for their national women's league also connect with the group (England, France, Germany, Denmark and Finland).

The Women's Leagues Forum decided to set up a board of 8 professional league leaders to represent them. It will be co-Chaired by two distinguished leaders in the world of women's football: Jessica Berman, Commissioner of the National Women's Soccer League (USA), and Annika Gralls, Chair of OBOS Damallsvenskan, EFD (Sweden). Together, they bring a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to advancing women's football. In addition, the board includes the following women's league representatives:

- Mariana Gutierrez, Head of Liga MX Femenil (Mexico)
- Haruna Takata, Chairwoman, WE League (Japan)
- Beatriz Alvarez, President, Liga F (Spain)
- Fiona McIntyre, Managing Director, Scottish Women's Premier League (Scotland)
- Nick Garcia, Commissioner, A Leagues (Australia)
- Loryn Paris, CEO, Pro League (Belgium)

The Board also co-opted Jean-Michel Aulas as a member, representing the French Women's League (organized by the French Football Federation).

Moya Dodd, a former national team player for Australia and former member of the FIFA Council who has consulted with World Leagues Forum on women's football since 2021, was appointed Secretary of the Board and will steer its work, together with Jerome Perlemuter, General Secretary of the World Leagues Forum.

The Women's Leagues Forum will provide an essential platform for women's leagues to collaborate, exchange best practices, pursue business development opportunities, and advocate for their collective interests. Importantly, it will address the unique needs and aspirations of women's football leagues, ensuring their voices are heard.

“We were thrilled to host the World Leagues Forum on the sidelines of our 2023 NWSL Championship this week, and I’m honored to have been chosen to help lead the Women’s Leagues Forum going forward,” said NWSL Commissioner Jessica Berman. “I also want to thank the incredibly talented Annika Gralls for accepting the responsibility as co-chair with me. This group began informally meeting in July 2022 and we quickly recognized the need for an advocacy and advisory forum that was exclusively focused on the women’s game, our leagues, and how we collectively continue to grow and thrive.”

“We need this starting point where we can come together to discuss our issues, focus on our future and to work for the changes that are needed for the best development for women’s league globally. I feel immense pride in taking on the role as Co-Chair for the Women’s Leagues Forum, and it’s a great task along with great responsibility that lays ahead of us. I want to thank Jessica Berman for embarking on this journey together with me and I look forward to working with this brilliant woman, as I believe in the positive change we can create together, said OBOS Damallsvenskan Chair Annika Gralls.

JP or MD quote: “The Women’s Leagues Forum is a much-needed initiative and we are proud to have been able to connect women’s national leagues from all around the world. There are too few rooms at a global level that convene solely around interests of the women’s game; to create one is a recognition of the crucial roles of professional clubs and leagues in creating everyday training environments for the world’s best players to thrive. It will facilitate sharing best practices, identifying common interests and shape a landscape that can best allow women’s football to develop, considering its specificities. We look forward to what is ahead of us.”

More background:

One of the driving forces behind the establishment of the Women’s Leagues Forum is the recognition that women’s leagues have become powerful engines of growth for women's football. However, these leagues have historically been underrepresented in football's governance structures. Due to the diverse governance models employed by women’s leagues, ranging from fully independent entities to integration with men's leagues to those that continue under national federations, their specific concerns and interests have often been overlooked.

The Women’s Leagues Forum will bridge this gap by fostering networking opportunities, sharing best practices, facilitating business development, and identifying common interests among women’s leagues worldwide. Its primary focus will be on matters critical to the commercial success of these leagues, such as the calendar and the regulation of player transfers.

The establishment of the Women’s Leagues Forum represents a pivotal moment in the history of women's football, reinforcing the commitment of the World Leagues Forum to advance the professionalization and development of the women’s game. Together, these leagues will continue to drive progress and inspire generations of footballers worldwide.

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About the World Leagues Forum: The World Leagues Forum is the world association of professional leagues. It was established in 2017 and represents more than forty men’s professional leagues. Its purpose is to help improve governance structures within world football, represent the leagues and their member clubs to sport and political institutions, and foster cooperation between leagues.

The members of the WLF (men’s professional leagues): Asia: Australian Professional Leagues (Australia), Indian Super League (India), J.League (Japan), Malaysian Football League (Malaysia), Qatar Stars League (Qatar), Saudi Professional League (Saudi Arabia), UAE Pro League (United Arab Emirates), Uzbekistan

Professional League (Uzbekistan) - Africa: Botswana Football League (Botswana), Egyptian Professional League (Egypt), Pro League (Madagascar), Ligue Nationale de Football Professionnel (Morocco), Nigeria Professional Football League (Nigeria), Premier Soccer League (South Africa), Zimbabwe Premier Soccer League (Zimbabwe) - North and Central America: Canadian Premier League (Canada), UNAFUT (Costa Rica), Liga Dominicana de Futbol (Dominican Republic), Liga Nacional de Fútbol Profesional Honduras (Honduras), Liga MX (Mexico), Liga Panamena de Futbol (Panama), Major League Soccer (USA) - South American: Dimayor (Colombia), LigaPro (Ecuador) - Europe: Pro League (Belgium), Divisionsforeningen (Denmark), Premier League (England), Ligue de Football Professionnel (France), DFL Deutsche Fußball Liga (Germany), Super League Greece (Greece), Israeli Professional Football Leagues (Israel), Serie A (Italy), Futbola Virsliga (Latvia), Eredivisie (Netherlands), Ekstraklasa (Poland), Liga Portugal (Portugal), Liga Profesionista de Fotbal (Romania), Scottish Professional Football League (Scotland), Super Liga Srbije (Serbia), La Liga (Spain), Foreningen Svensk Elitfotboll (Sweden), Swiss Football League (Switzerland), Ukrainian Premier League (Ukraine), Turkish Clubs Union (Turkey).