

African football is set to embark on a new era, with greater investment in football development and the chance for more teams to shine on the global stage, Gianni Infantino told a workshop for African member associations.

Speaking at the opening of the two-day event in Paris, which was organised to present the strategy for FIFA Forward 3.0 and outline good governance principles, Infantino stressed the importance of finding ways of encouraging more players to remain in Africa to exercise their profession.

“This will be a football year, this will be a women’s football year, this will be an important year, this will be the year of a new Forward cycle, this will be the year where we really start to make a difference, where we really start to make football truly global,” said the FIFA President.

“We are here to boost football and it is really time that we change the dynamics, that we change the speed, and that we change the gear when it comes to African football.”

In addition, The FIFA President said that the decision to expand the FIFA World Cup to 48 teams, practically doubling the number of spots for CAF from the current five to nine or ten, would have knock-on effects in encouraging investment.

“Almost every one of you can really dream realistically to be part of a World Cup and have a real chance to participate,” said Mr Infantino.

“Now, some of you will not participate, of course, but you will invest, your governments, your cities, your clubs will invest because there is a real possibility now to play in a World Cup.”

He explained that African teams would also benefit from FIFA’s plans to host the FIFA U-17 World Cup annually, with 48 teams in the men’s edition and 24 teams in the women’s, set to begin in the coming years.

Africa has 54 FIFA-affiliated nations, but only five out of the 32 teams that took part in the 2022 World Cup in Qatar were from Africa despite the continent having 54 member nations in FIFA.

Europe – while geographically smaller than Asia, Africa, North America and South America – will have the highest number at 13.

If size does not matter, does a region's success determine the number of berths it gets?