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FIFA 'not losing control' of 2022 World Cup, says Blatter



Reuters / ZURICH, Brian Homewood

FIFA has not lost control over the 2022 World Cup, President Sepp Blatter said on Thursday in response to ongoing controversy over whether the tournament should be staged in the European summer as planned. Blatter reiterated that any request to change the timing of the event to cooler months would have to come from the organizers themselves. He could not predict whether such a request would lead to a legal challenge from any of the countries who lost out to Qatar in the vote held in December 2010. "We are not losing control with the World Cup, or 2022," he told a news conference at FIFA headquarters. "Concerning the 2022 World Cup, discussions started at the time when the decision was taken and then people have realized that when playing summer will be difficult because it is very hot. "But the basic principles of the award of the World Cup were very clear and have not changed in the meantime. "They are still the same, FIFA's World Cup is a competition with 32 teams and 64 matches, and has to be played in June and July. "This has never been put into question by the organizers, who have been given the responsibility. "If there is a move it must come from Qatar, it is not relevant to the FIFA executive committee which stands by the decision taken in Dec. 2010." Blatter was quoted as saying on Wednesday in Spanish sports paper As that other candidates for the 2022 tournament could mount a legal challenge if the conditions of hosting were changed. However, FIFA said in a statement on Thursday that Blatter had said: "Any request for change must come from Qatar. But they have not made this request yet, because they know that if they do so, the other bidders could say 'ah, there is a change'." Blatter told the news conference that he could not predict what would happen if Qatar asked for a change. "I have put a question mark and that's all but I'm not a prophet to say what will happen," he said. "Let us be where we are and let us work on the World Cup 2014, there is enough to do for that competition, and then 2018 and then 2022. Qatar beat Australia, South Korea, Japan and the United States in the race to host the 2022 World Cup. Organizers said that matches would be played in air-conditioned stadiums which would be dismantled after the competition and shipped to developing nations. The debate about moving the tournament to the winter months is likely to continue until at least 2016 when a final tournament timetable must be approved by FIFA.