

# FIFA Panel Leaves Russia Anti-Gay Issue to Blatter

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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ZURICH — A FIFA task force against discrimination is not contacting 2018 World Cup host Russia about a controversial anti-gay law, panel chairman Jeffrey Webb said Thursday.

Instead, FIFA President Sepp Blatter and top official Jerome Valcke will lead the handling of the issue, which has threatened to affect preparations for the Sochi Olympics.

"We have been advised that the FIFA administration, the president and secretary general are in discussions with the Russian authorities," Webb said after the panel's six-hour session.

FIFA joined the IOC seeking clarification from Russia ahead of next February's Winter Games and the World Cup about how it would apply a new law banning promotion of "nontraditional" lifestyles to minors.

Webb said FIFA "does not tolerate or accept any form of discrimination."

Still, his panel that met Thursday does not plan to send guidelines to Russia and 2022 World Cup host Qatar, where homosexual acts are illegal.

"Whatever we do as a task force has to have the universality of the 209 [nation] membership of FIFA," said Webb, a vice president who leads the regional football body for North and Central America and the Caribbean (CONCACAF).

"If there is an infringement in regard to the FIFA statutes, that is for the FIFA disciplinary bodies and FIFA executive committee to address," he said. One of Webb's FIFA board colleagues is Russia's sports minister, Vitaly Mutko.

Thursday's meeting was a second for the task force, which succeeded in May pushing through recommendations for tougher sanctions following racist incidents in football.

Webb said priorities included better identification of high-risk World Cup matches and helping FIFA member countries recruit and train anti-discrimination specialists.

Promoting a global campaign using players as ambassadors is also planned at the task force's next scheduled meeting in December.

"FIFA, of course, cannot address the issues for society as a whole, but I think FIFA can definitely address it internally with coaches, players, clubs and stadiums," Webb said.

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