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Florentino Pérez, President of Real Madrid, remarks on the future of football and the European Super League - Real Madrid AGM

And now I would like to say a few words about the Super League.

The pandemic has undoubtedly made us live through one of the most difficult moments in our history and has forced us to accelerate our analysis regarding the future of football. And, as a result of these reflections, the Super League project was born.

What is the Super League? It is not simply a new competition. It is not a new international tournament without further ambition. It is much more than that. It is an attempt to change the current dynamic of football because, unless we do something, the sport will die little by little.

The Super League is freedom. It is a project designed to allow clubs to be the owners of their own destiny.

The Super League is self-governance. It was conceived so that European clubs can organize and manage international competitions in the same way we have managed our own national leagues for decades.

The Super League is financial sustainability. It is the project that will at last, implement financial controls which are strictly respected and prevent the increasing proliferation of unacceptable situations in which clubs receive indiscriminate financial support from States or other sources. This practice unbefitting of the European Union, adulterates competition and drives football into financial ruin.

The Super League is transparency and good corporate governance: it was designed with a professional, transparent and efficient system of governance, with decisions taken collectively by the participating clubs who, let us all remember, bear all of the costs and risks of the activity.

The Super League is about solidarity, and it is about commitment to creating a new format for football that will make it more competitive, and therefore more attractive, stable and sustainable. This is the only way to ensure that ALL clubs have access to more resources.

The Super League is respect for national competitions. Despite the many attempts to portray the Super League as a “breakaway competition”, it is undeniable that it was conceived as a project that fully respects domestic leagues. In fact, all the agreements reached by the founding clubs clearly state that the Super League would only be developed in a way that is compatible with the participation of the clubs in their national competitions.

The Super League is respect for fans and, above all, respect and passion for football. It saddens me to think that fans are fleeing from football and that it is especially young

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people who are turning away from this sport which until now has captivated the entire planet.

The data shows that the abundance of entertainment options available to young people today is pushing football out of its privileged position, and the trend is worrying.

In analysing this trend, we came to the conclusion that the proliferation of unattractive and inconsequential matches during the season is the main cause keeping spectators away from competitions. We are causing fans to abandon us.

It seems incredible but for example, Real Madrid and Chelsea had never met in Europe until last season. Two all-time greats such as Liverpool and Bayern Munich, each winners of 6 European Cups, have only faced each other twice, in 1981 and 2019, in the competition's 65 year history. Another historic club, Ajax, winner of 4 European Cups, having reached the Champions League semi-final in 2019, was forced to go through the qualifying rounds to participate in the following season's Champions League despite also being domestic champion. A format that causes anomalies such as these simply should not remain.

The competition format of the Super League will continually be open for debate, because it must always be adapted to the demands of football's global fan base over time. Whatever the format, it must be able to restore interest in football for the sake of all fans and especially the younger ones, to ensure the future of the sport which today is in danger.

These considerations, all of them worrying, have long been on the table of Europe's biggest clubs, which have the responsibility to be catalysts for the changes that are necessary to preserve the future of the sport. It is we, the clubs and not UEFA, who assume all (I insist, ALL) of the risks in football with budgets often in the hundreds of millions of euros. This is a heavy responsibility.

If under normal circumstances the situation was already serious and required a response from European clubs, the unprecedented economic crisis caused by the pandemic forced us to react immediately.

The final straw came last April when UEFA, ignoring the repeated requests of many European clubs, announced for 2024 the imposition of a new Champions League format, the so-called Swiss model, in which teams would have to play even more, inconsequential, less competitive matches, without the possibility of two-legged ties and in a single group of 36 clubs with discriminatory and frankly hard to understand draws. The project faced a lot of criticism from the football world because it would make the situation much worse.

In this context, hours before UEFA made the implementation of the new "Swiss Model" of the Champions League official, 12 of the world's top clubs announced the Super League Project, for which we created a company based in Madrid. This company then set out to achieve the essential objectives I have discussed:

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- Freedom and self-governance
- Financial controls
- Good governance and transparency
- Solidarity
- Competitiveness
- Respect for national competitions and fans and most importantly;
- Promoting football as the world's biggest sport.

Despite our attempts to establish dialogue with UEFA, which we explicitly expressed in our first press statement, the virulence of its reaction to the mere announcement of the Super League, (which is known to all), confirmed the vital importance of this project and the unavoidable need to regain our freedom and ability to manage our destiny.

Thereafter, clubs were threatened with sanctions unbefitting the rule of law and club presidents were insulted. **How is it possible for the UEFA President to publicly insult the president of Juventus, one of the oldest and most prestigious clubs, with words I am incapable of pronouncing here?** The Super League was attacked in every possible way.

The pressure and threats exerted by UEFA reached such an extreme that 9 of the 12 clubs had to publicly announce their will to withdraw from the project, regardless of the binding commitments they had signed and which could not be legally broken.

These threats and pressures had no effect on 3 historic clubs with a combined 21 European Cups and 33 European Cup finals between us. Two of them, Real Madrid and Barcelona, are 100% owned by their members and the other, Juventus, has remained in the same family for nearly 100 years caring for it as if it was owned by its members. These are clubs that have a duty and are committed to continue working so that football continues to excite new generations of fans.

It is worth remembering what Real Madrid stands for and perhaps UEFA should take note of this. Real Madrid is the most successful club in history, which has since its foundation in 1902, been involved in all major innovations over the years and has watched over football's traditions when they were in danger. It was the only club in the world to be a founding member of FIFA along with a few federations from other countries. It was also, in 1955 the driving force behind the creation of the European Cup together with the newspaper L'Equipe.

That was a historic moment for European football which changed the history of football around the world. UEFA showed its radical opposition at the time and our President Santiago Bernabeu had to suffer threats for more than two years. We are once again facing a similar situation.

The current state of football leaves us no choice but to continue to defend our legitimate interests. At the judicial level, the courts of justice have upheld and protected the Super League and its promoters, and have issued a legally binding injunction obliging UEFA to

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annul the sanctioning processes initiated against Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus and to void the fines imposed on the remaining 9 founding clubs.

More importantly, our competition case has been referred to the Court of Justice of the European Union in Luxembourg which will rule on the legality of UEFA's monopoly on pan-European club competitions in a way that is binding for the entire European Union, a verdict that UEFA will be obliged to comply with because, although it is a private Swiss association, it operates on European Union territory.

This legal process seems to very seriously concern UEFA because it has gone to great lengths to try and stop it, even requesting in writing, that the 9 founding members who distanced themselves from the project take all steps possible to force the Super League to withdraw the ongoing legal actions.

In truth, as the sponsors of the Super League have said, UEFA is in permanent and insurmountable conflict as it is both the regulator and the sole organizer of European competitions, while at the same time retaining the right to block any other competitor from entering the market. This situation would not be permissible in any sector or industry under European Union law.

UEFA has also established a governance structure and majority rule that can in no way guarantee that the interests of the European Union and its citizens are looked after. UEFA is composed of 55 federations, each with one vote irrespective of population or other weighting. EU Member states have 27 of these 55 votes and we are in the minority and unprotected.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, together with Russia, other federations of countries that have not been admitted to the Council of Europe due to their lack of democratic guarantees or federations that are not even part of Europe, have joined UEFA alongside Russia.

Small countries, which we hold very dearly, such as Andorra, San Marino, Faroe Islands or Liechtenstein which have a combined population of under 200 000, each have one vote, the same as Germany with a population of 83 million.

Furthermore, 26 out of the 28 federations that are not in the European Union have a lower combined population than the 4 most populated countries in the EU: Germany, France, Italy and Spain.

This is the governance model that did not heed the requests for dialogue from the Super League and its founding clubs and that protects formats such as the "Swiss model" of the Champions League, with more and more inconsequential and uninteresting matches. This can only be understood from the perspective of the purely political interests of the current operators to maintain their privileges. The legal process will continue, despite UEFA's public willingness to delay and block it.

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We have full confidence in the European courts and in particular in the European Court of Justice, who have the mission and the duty to ensure respect for the freedoms and rights of all citizens of the European Union. No one is above the law.

We, as a club, will not give in to threats to exclude us from European competitions because we have broken no rules and such threats are in direct contravention of directives from European courts.

We will not give in because without reforms, the relaxation of financial fair play rules as announced by the UEFA President last April, could allow injections of funds from States and other sources from outside the EU into certain clubs, seriously compromising the future of football.

We European football clubs need professionalised, independent and transparent governance structures without conflicts of interest to ensure our future in the face of the growing threat of parties from outside the EU using European football for other purposes.

It is essential that all football clubs live off the resources generated by the game itself and thus avoid being used by outside forces for other than purely sporting purposes.

The European Cup was created so that fans could watch the best football and that is what the Super League wants now: more competitive, and attractive football for fans all over the world while remaining committed to the principle of solidarity, so that football can remain as a global sport and continue to excite fans all over the world.