



COMPETITION REGULATIONS

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2017



AFC
CHAMPIONS
LEAGUE

ONE ASIA ● ONE GOAL

AFC Champions League 2017 Competition Regulations

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DEFINITIONS

In these Competition Regulations, capitalised terms shall have the following meanings, unless the context specifically indicates otherwise:

Accommodation	Any location approved by the AFC which provides accommodation to the AFC Delegation, Team Official Delegations, AFC Commercial Rights Partner, and Official Licensees
Accreditation Card	Any physical item which is issued by the AFC and/or Host Club which provides the recipient the right to access a Controlled Access Area (or part thereof) where the Controlled Access Area is under the control of the AFC, Host Club or the Host Association.
Advertising Rights	The right to promote brand and/or corporate names and/or products and/or services at and/or in relation to the Competition by whatever means available, whether existing now or to be developed in the future, whether at the Stadium or Facility Areas or within the Controlled Access Areas, in association with the Competition Marks and/or AFC Marks, by in-stadium/out-stadium perimeter signage and other advertising, digital signage and screens, closed circuit television, equipment usage or other methods and through printed matter (including digitally delivered printed matter) such as programme, posters, letterheads, press releases, newsletters and Tickets, and subject to any AFC regulations, the right to display such advertising on the clothing or footwear worn, or on any equipment used, carried or transported by officials (including for the avoidance of doubt Match Officials), medical and security staff, ballkids, player escorts, flag bearers and/or photographers. The display of the name and/or logo of the bona fide supplier of clothing on the strip of the uniforms of the officials are also included. For the avoidance of doubt, advertising on the strip of Participating Players is excluded, other than where it is the trade mark of the bona fide manufacturer and is in accordance with any FIFA and/or AFC regulations. Similarly, branding on any equipment, goods and/or services used in connection with the Competition, save where supplied by a Official Licensee, may only include customary branding of the bona fide manufacturer and may not be associated in any way with the Commercial Rights.
AFC	Asian Football Confederation.
AFCAS	The AFC Administration System, the AFC online competition management and registration system.
AFC Champions League	The Competition.

AFC Commercial Rights Partner	The entity appointed by the AFC for the sale of Commercial Rights (or any part thereof) and the provision of services in relation thereto.
AFC Committee	One (1) or more (as the context defines) of the Standing Committees of the AFC as promulgated within the AFC Statutes.
AFC Competitions Committee	The AFC internal organising committee for the Competition which has been appointed in accordance with the AFC Statutes, and which has ultimate authority over all matters relating to the organisation of the Competition.
AFC Delegation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) AFC staff; (ii) Match Officials; (iii) other officials appointed by the AFC (iv) AFC Committee members; and (v) AFC guests.
AFC Marks	All design marks, slogans, designations, names, logos, insignia, emblems or devices (in any application) owned and/or controlled by the AFC (in any language) relating to the AFC itself, but excluding the Competition Marks.
AFC Website	The domain http://www.the-afc.com owned by the AFC, including without limitation all other domains or official media platforms and channels created and/or owned by the AFC (e.g. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc).
Away Club	A Participating Club who is playing a Match in the Competition away from their home Stadium.
Away Goals Rule	At the end of the second Match played in a knockout home and away format, if the Participating Clubs have scored the same number of goals across both Matches, the Participating Club which has scored the higher number of goals away from home shall be declared the winner.
Broadcast Licensee	Any entity, including the Host Broadcaster, which has been granted the Media Rights from the AFC or the AFC Commercial Rights Partner for the Competition.

Champion	The Participating Club that wins the final Match of the Competition.
Club	A professional club or an amateur club which participates in Leagues or competitions under the auspices of a Football Association.
Clean Stadium	<p>A Stadium or Official Training Site whether inside, in the air space above or the outer perimeter, delivered to the AFC at a prescribed time, that is free from:</p> <p>(i) any advertising and commercial signage of any kind, whether on any stadium infrastructure, staff uniforms, accreditations, fences, equipment or elsewhere;</p> <p>(ii) third party agreements relating to the use and operation of the Stadium (or part thereof) and/or</p> <p>(iii) stadium or venue naming rights.</p>
Commercial Rights	Advertising Rights, Concession Rights, Hospitality Rights, Image Rights, Media Rights, Merchandise Rights, Promotional Rights, Sponsorship Rights, and Travel and Tour Rights.
Competition	The AFC Champions League™, which includes without limitation, all Matches as set out in the Match Schedule, all qualifying, Preliminary Stage and Playoff Stage Matches, all activities on the Field of Play (other than Matches), opening ceremonies, presentation or closing ceremonies, press conferences or Official Functions connected therewith.
Competition Data	Any and all information related to the Competition, including fixture lists, Image Rights, information and/or statistics about the Participating Clubs and/or Participating Players, information and/or statistics about their participation and/or performance in the Competition, Match analysis, Referee decisions, and any other information in relation to the Competition.
Competition Marks	All design marks, slogans, designations, names, logos, insignia, emblems, mascot or devices (in any application) owned and/or controlled by the AFC (in any language) relating to the Competition.
Competition Title	“AFC Champions League [insert year]” or any variation thereof as advised and adopted by the AFC.

Competition Website	The official website of the Competition with a dedicated URL including without limitation all other domains or official media platforms and channels of the Competition created and/or owned by the AFC (e.g. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc.)
Complimentary Tickets	Tickets which are supplied without charge.
Concession Rights	Sampling, vending, display and other distribution methods and payment methods connected therewith for and of products or services, including pourage rights at the Stadium and Facility Areas.
Controlled Access Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) any Stadium; (ii) any Official Training Site; (iii) any official hotel (public areas being excepted), subject to and to the extent agreed in any executed hotel agreement; (iv) any official exclusion zone encircling a Stadium on a Match day; (v) any official parking area, accreditation centre, International Broadcast Compound, and/or hospitality area; (vi) the venue of any Official Function; (vii) any official AFC fan park; (viii) Facility Areas; and/or (ix) any other location and/or facility designated by the AFC as a Controlled Access Area, <p>associated to the Competition to which access is permitted only to those in possession of an Accreditation Card, Ticket, and/or other officially sanctioned entry permit.</p>
Extra Time	Two (2) equal periods of additional time which shall be played in accordance with these Regulations should there be no winner at the conclusion of a Match.
Facility Areas	The location of Official Functions, ceremonies, press centres, ticket offices, competition hotels, media areas (including without limitation areas used for viewing of any public

exhibition), sponsor village areas (including without limitation “AFC fan park” areas, and areas used for the activation of the Commercial Rights), official hospitality areas (including without limitation areas used for the exploitation of the Hospitality Rights), and information centres controlled by or on behalf of the AFC and used in connection with the Competition whether at the Stadium or elsewhere at the Venues.

Field of Play	The area described in Law 1 of the Laws of the Game issued by the International Football Association Board (IFAB) and administered by FIFA.
FIFA	The Federation International de Football Association.
Finals	The final two (2) Matches of the Competition which determines the Champion.
Football Association	The controlling body for football within a country or territory recognised by the AFC.
Force Majeure	Any event affecting the performance or any provision of these Regulations arising from or attributable to acts, events, omissions or accidents which are beyond the reasonable control of a party, and shall include but not be limited to abnormally inclement weather, flood, lightning, storm, fire, explosion, earthquake, structural damage, epidemic or other natural disaster, failure or shortage of power supplies, war, terrorist action, military operations, riot, crowd disorder, strike, lock-outs or other industrial action, or civil commotion.
Group Stage	The third stage of the Competition held in accordance with these Regulations.
Hospitality Rights	The opportunity to offer and sell hospitality and entertainment facilities at the Venues or within the Controlled Access Areas in combination with the Tickets as may be purchased from the Host Association whether such facilities are in boxes, marquees or otherwise, but excluding those private facilities reserved for AFC officials and its guests not forming part of the Commercial Rights.
Host Broadcaster	The party appointed by the AFC to ensure and provide the production of broadcast signals of the Matches and other events of the Competition, and the provision of all related services in accordance with the Media Rights granted to it.

Host Association	A Member Association approved by the AFC to organise, stage, and host Matches in the Competition.
Host City	Any city and/or identifiable metropolitan area in which any Match is staged.
Host Club	A Participating Club who is approved by the AFC to organise, stage, and host Matches in the Competition in collaboration with their respective Host Association.
Image Rights	The right to use still and/or moving images and/or representations of images of Participating Clubs and Participating Players participating in the Competition, and including, for the avoidance of doubt, images of Participating Officials, Match Officials, and other officials forming part of the Competition.
Knockout Stage	The fourth stage of the Competition held in accordance with these Regulations.
Laws of Game	The Laws of association football issued by the IFAB
League	A professional league and/or amateur league which consists of a combination of Clubs within the territory of a Football Association and which is subordinate to and under the authority of that Football Association.
Match	A football match in its entirety (including a replayed and/or deferred football match, Extra Time and Penalty Kicks) which takes place as part of the Competition in accordance with the Match Schedule. For the avoidance of doubt, a Match formally commences when the Stadium is officially opened to spectators and formally concludes when the Stadium is officially closed to spectators.
Match Officials	Any individual appointed to officiate a Match in the Competition in the role of referee, assistant referee, fourth official or fifth official, and the appointed Referee Assessor(s).
Match Schedule	The official schedule which sets out, without limitation, the dates and times on which Matches will be played, the Stadium at which the Matches will be played, and the names of the Participating Clubs.

Media	Any individual granted a media Accreditation Card by the AFC.
Match Subsidy	The payment made to a Participating Club for its participation in a Match, comprised of one (1) or more of the following: travel subsidy, performance bonus, and/or participation fee.
Media	Any individual entitled to a media Accreditation Card as determined by the AFC.
Media Rights	The right and license to produce, edit, and transmit, for intelligible reception throughout the world in any language and in any format, and on any platform including film, fixed media, digital media, games, internet, public exhibition, radio, mobile, and television, a visual, audio-visual, and/or audio signal and/or image or recording (including without limitation the basic feed, multi feeds, additional feeds, audio feeds, a feed incorporating Competition Data, world feed, and unilateral feeds) of the Competition, and all interview activities and action during and forming part of the Competition including Official Functions and the Image Rights by any and all means of transmission distribution, exhibition and reception, now existing or hereinafter developed including but not limited to analogue, digital, satellite cable and interactive communication systems, on a live, delayed, and unlimited repeat basis, in full or in part (including without limitation by way of clips and/or highlights and/or support programme and/or magazine shows and/or news access), and all rights to exploit any and all commercial opportunities (including for example broadcast sponsorship and commercial airtime opportunities) arising from and/or in connection with such rights.
Member Association	A Football Association which is a member of the AFC.
Merchandise Rights	The right granted to Official Licensees for the use and exploitation of the Competition Marks and/or official designation in the manufacture, packaging, distribution, and sale of goods and services of all kinds, including items of equipment (i.e. footballs), clothing, coins, medals, games (electronic or otherwise), other collectibles and premiums related to the Competition.

Neutral Venue	<p>Any Stadium utilised for a Match which is not the regular home Stadium or Venue utilised by the Participating Club designated as the Host Club, unless expressly authorised by the AFC.</p> <p>The designation of a Stadium as a Neutral Venue must be expressly authorised by the AFC in accordance with these Regulations.</p>
Official Countdown	An official document produced by the AFC which stipulates the events and activities to be carried out at specific times by the Participating Clubs on Match day.
Official Function	<p>Any event which is officially organised or sanctioned by the AFC in connection with the Competition.</p> <p>For the avoidance of doubt, this expressly includes, without limitation, all matches and/or events held at Official Training Sites, the Opening Ceremony, the Closing Ceremony, any AFC gala dinner, lunch, or banquet, cultural events, official press conferences, official draw, workshop and launch events.</p>
Official Training Site	Any site designated by the Host Club in collaboration with their respective Host Association and approved by the AFC for use by the Participating Clubs throughout the duration of the Competition for training purposes.
Participating Club	A Club who is approved by the AFC to participate in the Competition.
Participating Official	Any official who is registered to participate in the Competition.
Participating Player	Any player who is registered to participate in the Competition.
Penalty Kicks	“Kicks from the Penalty Mark” as described in the Laws of the Game.
Playoff Stage	The second stage of the Competition held in accordance with these Regulations.
Preliminary Stage	The first stage of the Competition held in accordance with these Regulations.

Premiums	Any promotional item (including packaging, labelling, and/or containers thereof) which incorporates a mark and/or logo of the AFC and/or the Competition, and which is distributed free of charge or via prize competitions.
Promotional Rights	Any rights to official publications, official suppliers, official products, sales promotion including but not limited to the right to organise promotional competitions (including without limitation any sweepstakes or lotteries) and to make awards and give prizes, official music rights, the right to use an official designation and all other rights of commercial value in regard to the Competition.
Proprietary Interests	Without limitation, intellectual property, copyright and analogous rights, trademark rights, moral rights, performing rights, personality rights, and all remedies available under the applicable laws of unfair competition comprised in the Commercial Rights.
Quarter Final	The second round of Matches in the Knockout Stage.
Regulations	These Competition Regulations.
Round of 16	The first round of Matches in the Knockout Stage.
Runner Up	The Participating Club that loses the Final.
Semi Final	The third round of Matches in the Knockout Stage.
Sponsorship Rights	The right, in any and all media, throughout the world, and in all languages, to promote an association between the Competition and certain products, services, and/or brands, and shall include (by way of illustration only) the exclusive right to exercise rights of association with the Competition, including without limitation the right to (a) use an official designation; (b) use the AFC Marks and/or applicable Competition Marks on branded products and/or product packaging (including Premiums, and in relation to the Competition Marks only on items for retail sale) and/or advertising; (c) receive commercial programme Tickets, and (d) the right to receive broadcast sponsorship opportunities in connections with broadcasts of a Match or Official Function.
Stadium	Any stadium at which a Match is played. For the avoidance of doubt, this includes:

- (i) the entire premises (to the extent that a valid Accreditation Card or Ticket is required in order to gain access) of a stadium facility inside the outer stadium perimeter fence and (on Match days and any day on which any official Team practice session takes place within the stadium), the aerial space above such stadium premises;
- (ii) parking facilities;
- (iii) VIP and hospitality areas (including any hospitality village);
- (iv) the Media tribune;
- (v) concessions areas;
- (vi) commercial display areas;
- (vii) buildings;
- (viii) the Field of Play;
- (ix) any broadcast compound or stadium media centre;
- (x) any stands; and,
- (xi) any areas beneath the stands.

Team Official Delegation	The final-registered delegation of a Participating Club for each Match of the relevant stage of the Competition subject to the limits set out in these Regulations.
Ticket	A pass providing access to a venue for the purpose of attending either a Match or Official Training, or Official Function.
Ticketing	All operational measures to provide Tickets to all spectators of every Match and for Official Functions of the Competition allowing them to enter the Stadium or a Venue. Ticketing shall include the management of the operation necessary for the production, sale, distribution, delivery and payment of the Tickets of the Competition.
Travel and Tour Rights	The right to organise and/or sub-license official travel and tour activities in relation to the Competition, which travel and tour activities shall, for the avoidance of doubt, include the provision of Tickets to a Match and/or Official Function

of the Competition.

Venue The Host City and immediate surrounding area in which a Stadium is located.

For the purposes of these Regulations, and provided the context so permits:

- (a) the singular shall include the plural and vice-versa;
- (b) the feminine gender shall include the masculine and vice-versa;
- (c) reference to natural persons shall include any legal person or corporation;
- (d) references to the AFC shall include its successors and permitted assigns and, in relation to the availability of the Commercial Rights, its respective Member Associations and AFC Committees;
- (e) reference to the AFC Commercial Rights Partner or Official Licensees shall include where advised by the AFC, its successors, and permitted assigns and, in relation to the exercise and exploitation of the Commercial Rights;
- (f) all defined terms, unless otherwise stated herein shall bear the same meaning as ascribed in the AFC Statutes, unless the context indicates otherwise.

SECTION 1: AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The AFC stages the AFC Champions League annually for Participating Clubs.
- 1.2. These Regulations set out the rights, duties, and responsibilities of the AFC and the Participating Clubs (as well as their Member Associations and Leagues) taking part in the Competition.
- 1.3. These Regulations and all directives, decisions, guidelines, and circulars issued by the AFC shall be binding upon all parties participating and involved in the preparation, organisation, and hosting of Matches in the Competition.
- 1.4. The AFC Competition Operations Manual (“**Manual**”) forms an integral part and shall be read in conjunction with these Regulations. The Manual shall be binding upon all parties participating and involved in the preparation, organisation, and hosting of matches in the Competition. Failure to adhere to any matters set out in the Manual may lead to the imposition of sanctions as set out in the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code. In the event of any discrepancy between these Regulations and the Manual, these Regulations shall prevail to the extent of the inconsistency.
- 1.5. Any rights and Proprietary Interests associated with the Competition that are not granted by these Regulations and/or specific agreements to any Member Association and/or any Participating Club belong to the AFC.
- 1.6. Any reference to the AFC Statutes and to AFC and FIFA regulations refer to those valid at the time of application.

SECTION 2: RESPONSIBILITIES

2. The Asian Football Confederation

- 2.1 The AFC Competitions Committee shall be responsible for organising the Competition in accordance with the AFC Statutes. The AFC General Secretariat shall carry out the necessary administrative work in support of the AFC Competitions Committee.
- 2.2 The responsibilities of the AFC shall include, but are not limited to:
- 2.2.1. supervising general preparations and deciding on the Competition format, the draws, and the entries to the Competition;
 - 2.2.2. determining the Match Schedule (*cf* Article 7);
 - 2.2.3. selecting Stadia for the Competition after consultation with the Participating Clubs and their Member Associations (*cf* Article 16);
 - 2.2.4. appointing Match Officials for each Match;
 - 2.2.5. choosing the official football and stipulated technical material;
 - 2.2.6. approving the choice of the WADA-accredited laboratories that will carry out the doping analyses (*cf* Article 53);
 - 2.2.7. reporting cases where appropriate to the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee (*cf* Article 54);
 - 2.2.8. replacing Participating Clubs that have withdrawn from the Competition (*cf* Articles 5 and 6);
 - 2.2.9. dealing with cases of cancelled Matches or abandoned Matches (*cf* Articles 14 and 15);
 - 2.2.10. dealing with cases of Force Majeure (*cf* Article 71);
 - 2.2.11. providing insurance coverage for the AFC Delegation appointed to any Match from the time of their departure from their home Member Association to their departure from the Host Association (*cf* Article 61); and
 - 2.2.12. dealing with any other aspect of the Competition that is not the responsibility of any other body of the AFC pursuant to these Regulations and/or the AFC Statutes (*cf* Article 72).

- 2.3. All decisions made by the AFC Competitions Committee and AFC General Secretariat are final and binding and not appealable.
- 2.4. All decisions made by the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee in relation to the Competition are subject to the operation of the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code.

3. Participating Clubs and Member Associations

- 3.1. The principal obligations and responsibilities of each Participating Club and its Member Association are stipulated in the Participating Team Agreement (“PTA”), these Regulations, the Manual, the AFC Statutes, and all other AFC regulations, directives, guidelines and circulars.
 - 3.1.1. Each Participating Club that has qualified for the Competition (*cf* Article 4) must submit a PTA.
 - 3.1.2. The PTA shall be completed and submitted to the AFC not later than the deadline provided by the AFC.
 - 3.1.3. Failure to submit the PTA to the AFC by the deadline shall result in the non-participation of the Participating Club.
- 3.2. Each Participating Club shall ensure as a condition of its participation that every member of its Team Official Delegation for each Match is aware of and agrees to comply with the PTA.
- 3.3. Each Participating Club shall undertake to:
 - 3.3.1. observe all obligations set out in the PTA, these Regulations, the Manual, the AFC Statutes, and all other AFC regulations, directives, guidelines and circulars, and applicable national and supra-national laws;
 - 3.3.2. comply with the Laws of the Game laid down by the IFAB and published by FIFA;
 - 3.3.3. accept that all the administrative, disciplinary and refereeing matters connected with the Competition shall be settled by the AFC in compliance with these Regulations;
 - 3.3.4. field their strongest team throughout the Competition;
 - 3.3.5. observe the principles of Fair Play;
 - 3.3.6. ensure the good conduct of its Team Official Delegation who have been provided with an Accreditation Card and of any person carrying

out duties on its behalf throughout the Competition, which includes but is not limited to their arrival on the territory of any Host Association until their departure;

3.3.6.1. failure to ensure the good conduct of its Team Official Delegation may result in the Participating Club being issued with a fine;

3.3.6.2. the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee may issue further sanctions in its discretion;

3.3.7. as Host Club, make the appropriate arrangements for the staging of Matches, in conjunction with its Member Association and the AFC General Secretariat, in accordance with these Regulations;

3.3.8. accept all the arrangements made by any Host Club and/or Host Association in agreement with the AFC;

3.3.9. attend and participate in all official activities and events, including without limitation any team arrival meeting, match coordination meeting, press conference, and other media and marketing activities in accordance with the instructions issued by the AFC;

3.3.9.1. failure to attend and/or fully participate in any official activity or event shall result in the Participating Club being fined at least USD10,000;

3.3.9.2. the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee may issue further sanctions in its discretion;

3.3.10. provide to the AFC, prior to the Competition, statistics and photographs of its Participating Players and Participating Officials, historical information related to its Participating Club and approved Stadium (including photographs), and any further data as requested and in accordance with instructions issued by the AFC; and

3.3.11. link the official URL for the Competition on its official website.

3.4. Each Participating Club (and its Member Association), at their own expense, are solely responsible throughout the Competition for:

3.4.1. the insurance coverage of:

3.4.1.1. its Team Official Delegation (including without limitation hospitalisation and surgical operations, team equipment), for all Matches;

- 3.6.2. any intercontinental competition(s) arranged by the AFC with other confederations.
- 3.7. Participating Clubs are not authorised to represent the AFC or the Competition without the prior written approval of the AFC.
- 3.8. All nominated Participating Players and Participating Officials shall ensure their presence at the AFC Awards Night in the calendar year for an annual AFC award. A written approval of the AFC is required in the event the nominated Participating Players and Participating Officials are unable to attend.
- 3.9. Each Host Club and its Member Association shall ensure that any decision made by the AFC relating to its duties and responsibilities is enforced immediately.

SECTION 3: ENTRY, WITHDRAWAL, MATCH SCHEDULE, COMPETITION SYSTEM

4. Entry

- 4.1. Entry to the Competition is governed by the Entry Manual for AFC Club Competitions 2017-2020 (**Entry Manual**).
 - 4.1.1. In accordance with the Entry Manual, Participating Clubs are those who meet sporting criteria and club licensing criteria.
 - 4.1.2. The sporting criteria and club licensing criteria are set out in the Entry Manual.
- 4.2. All decisions regarding entry to the Competition are subject to the appeal provisions set out in the Entry Manual.
- 4.3. Eligible Participating Clubs must complete the PTA and submit it to the AFC in accordance with Article 3 to confirm their entry into the Competition.
 - 4.3.1. The name and/or logo of a Participating Club shall not directly refer to the name and/or logo of any third-party entity, whether or not that third-party entity is a commercial partner or sponsor of the Participating Club.
 - 4.3.2. The AFC may grant an exception if one (1) of the following requirements are met:
 - 4.3.2.1. the name of the Participating Club is a pre-existing name with long-term use. The third-party entity must have been directly involved in the creation of the Participating Club itself (by financial or other means); or
 - 4.3.2.2. the Participating Club previously competed in an AFC competition utilising the name.
- 4.4. Participating Clubs are not permitted to change their name after the first Match in the Competition has been played.

5. Withdrawal Prior to Commencement of the Competition

- 5.1. Any Participating Club that enters the Competition shall undertake to play all of its Matches as set out in the Match Schedule.

- 5.2. In the case of a Participating Club withdrawing or being excluded from the Competition, the AFC Competitions Committee shall be responsible for making any necessary decisions, including without limitation whether to:
 - 5.2.1. replace the Participating Club;
 - 5.2.2. change the competition system (*cf* Article 8); and/or
 - 5.2.3. change the technical rules (*cf* Section 4).
- 5.3. All decisions of the AFC Competitions Committee in this regard are final and binding and not appealable.
- 5.4. Any Participating Club that withdraws up to thirty (30) days before its first Match shall be fined at least USD10,000.
- 5.5. Any Participating Club that withdraws less than thirty (30) days before its first Match shall be fined at least USD 20,000.
- 5.6. The AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee may impose further sanctions in its discretion.

6. Withdrawal After Commencement of the Competition

- 6.1. Any Participating Club that:
 - 6.1.1. withdraws from the Competition after it has commenced; or
 - 6.1.2. does not report for a Match; or
 - 6.1.3. refuses to continue a Match; or
 - 6.1.4. leaves the Stadium prior to the completion of a Match,shall be considered to have withdrawn from the Competition after its commencement.
- 6.2. A Participating Club that withdraws from the Competition after it has commenced shall:
 - 6.2.1. have all its Matches cancelled and considered null and void. For the avoidance of doubt, all points and goals in those Matches shall not be taken into consideration when determining the final rankings in the Group Stage pursuant to Article 10.5;
 - 6.2.2. be required to pay compensation for any and all damages or losses suffered by, where applicable, the other Participating Club(s), the AFC,

the AFC Commercial Rights Partner, Official Licensees, Broadcast Licensees, and the Member Associations. The amount of compensation shall be determined by the AFC Executive Committee;

- 6.2.3. be disqualified from participating in the next two (2) editions of the Competition;
- 6.2.4. be disqualified from participating in any tournaments listed in Article 3.6, if qualification has been attained;
- 6.2.5. be fined:
 - 6.2.5.1. at least USD20,000 if it withdraws after the commencement of the Preliminary Stage; or
 - 6.2.5.2. at least USD30,000 if it withdraws after the commencement of the Playoff Stage; or
 - 6.2.5.3. at least USD50,000 if it withdraws after the commencement of the Group Stage; or
 - 6.2.5.4. at least USD100,000 if it withdraws after the commencement of the Knockout Stage.
- 6.2.6. be referred to the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee which may impose further sanctions in its discretion; and
- 6.2.7. return to the AFC any Match Subsidy that had been paid in support of their participation in the Competition or if not yet paid, forfeit their right to that Match Subsidy.
- 6.3. The AFC Competitions Committee shall take whatever action it deems necessary against the Member Association of a Participating Club that withdraws from the Competition after it has commenced.
- 6.4. The above Articles 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 are not applicable in cases of Force Majeure recognised by the AFC Competitions Committee.
- 6.5. The AFC Competitions Committee shall take whatever action it deems necessary in cases of Force Majeure.

7. Match Schedule

- 7.1. All Matches shall be played in accordance with the AFC Competitions Calendar.
 - 7.1.1. Participating Clubs shall indicate their preferred kick-off times upon entry to the Competition or by a deadline stipulated by the AFC.

- 7.1.2. Where necessary for sporting reasons and taking into consideration the time zones, Matches in the same group of the Group Stage may be played simultaneously.
- 7.1.3. All kick-off times shall be determined by the AFC General Secretariat, taking into consideration sporting, marketing, and broadcasting matters.
- 7.2. The Match Schedule shall be determined following the official draws for the Preliminary Stage, Playoff Stage, Group Stage and Knockout Stage. The date and format of the official draws shall be determined by the AFC General Secretariat.
- 7.3. The AFC General Secretariat retains final discretion to amend the Match Schedule.

8. Competition System

- 8.1. The Competition shall consist of four (4) stages:
 - 8.1.1. the Preliminary Stage;
 - 8.1.2. the Playoff Stage;
 - 8.1.3. the Group Stage; and
 - 8.1.4. the Knockout Stage.
- 8.2. The Entry Manual sets out the calculation to determine the number of slots allocated to the Clubs of qualifying Member Associations in the Preliminary Stage, Playoff Stage, and Group Stage (**MA Ranking**). The AFC Competitions Committee shall decide upon the format of the competition system.
- 8.3. Depending on the number of entries, or in the case of withdrawal or suspension of any Participating Clubs, the AFC Competitions Committee may change the competition system and/or technical rules.

9. Preliminary Stage and Playoff Stage

- 9.1. Each round of the Preliminary Stage and Playoff Stage shall be conducted in accordance with the Match Schedule. The Participating Club from the higher-ranked Member Association pursuant to the MA Ranking shall host the Match, which shall be played on a single knock-out basis.
- 9.2. The duration of Matches, including Extra Time and Penalty Kicks (if required), shall be played in accordance with the procedures described in the Laws of the

Game and the Manual. The Away Goals Rule does not apply in the Preliminary Stage and Playoff Stage.

- 9.3. At the conclusion of each Match in the Preliminary Stage:
- 9.3.1. the Participating Club who wins the Match shall qualify for the next round of the Preliminary Stage. If it is the final round of the Preliminary Stage, the Participating Club shall qualify for the Playoff Stage; and
 - 9.3.2. the Participating Club who loses the Match shall, in accordance with the MA Ranking, either be eliminated from the Competition or enter the AFC Cup at the determined stage.
- 9.4. At the conclusion of each Match in the Playoff Stage:
- 9.4.1. the Participating Club who wins the Match shall qualify for the next round of the Playoff Stage. If it is the final round of the Playoff Stage, the Participating Club shall qualify for the Group Stage; and
 - 9.4.2. the Participating Club who loses the Match shall, in accordance with the MA Ranking, either be eliminated from the Competition or enter the AFC Cup at the determined stage.

10. Group Stage

- 10.1. The thirty-two (32) Participating Clubs entered in the Group Stage shall be undertaken in accordance with the Entry Manual. They shall be drawn into eight (8) groups of four (4) teams each.
- 10.1.1. Four (4) groups shall contain Participating Clubs from the West zone, South zone, and Central zone (**West Region**), and four (4) groups shall contain Participating Clubs from the East zone and ASEAN zone (**East Region**). The zones shall be in accordance with the AFC Statutes.
 - 10.1.2. Participating Clubs from the same Member Association shall not be drawn in the same group.
 - 10.1.3. The AFC General Secretariat may decide to exceptionally depart from this system, taking into account sporting, geographic, and economic factors. The Entry Manual may provide further information.
- 10.2. Each Participating Club plays one (1) home and one (1) away Match against each of the Participating Clubs in its group in accordance with the Match Schedule.

- 10.3. The duration of Matches shall be played in accordance with the procedures described in the Laws of the Game, the Manual, and Article 12.
- 10.4. At the conclusion of each Match:
- 10.4.1. three (3) points shall be awarded to the winner;
 - 10.4.2. one (1) point shall be awarded to each Participating Club for a draw;
 - 10.4.3. zero (0) points shall be awarded to the loser.
- 10.5. The ranking in each group shall be determined in descending order as follows:
- 10.5.1. higher number of points obtained in group Matches played among the Participating Clubs in question;
 - 10.5.2. if two (2) or more Participating Clubs are equal on points on completion of the group Matches, the following criteria are applied to determine the ranking (in descending order):

Head-to-Head Criteria

- 10.5.2.1. higher number of points obtained in the group Matches played among the Participating Clubs in question;
- 10.5.2.2. superior goal difference from the group Matches played among the Participating Clubs in question;
- 10.5.2.3. higher number of goals scored in the group Matches played among the Participating Clubs in question;
- 10.5.2.4. higher number of goals scored away from home in the group Matches played among the Participating Clubs in question;

Tiebreaker

- 10.5.2.5. if, after having applied the Head-to-Head criteria, two (2) or more Participating Clubs still have an equal ranking, the Head-to-Head criteria shall be reapplied exclusively to the Matches between the Participating Clubs in question to determine their final rankings. If this procedure does not lead to a decision, the Group Results criteria shall apply;

Group Results Criteria

- 10.5.2.6. superior goal difference from all group Matches played;
- 10.5.2.7. higher number of goals scored from all group Matches played;

- 10.5.2.8. Penalty Kicks if only the two (2) Participating Clubs are both on the Field of Play;
 - 10.5.2.9. the lower score calculated according to the number of yellow and red cards received in group Matches (**Appendix 1 of the Manual**); or
 - 10.5.2.10. the Participating Club who belongs to the Member Association with the higher MA Ranking.
- 10.6. On the basis of Article 10.5, at the conclusion of the Group Stage:
- 10.6.1. the first and second placed Participating Club in each group shall qualify for the Knockout Stage; and
 - 10.6.2. the third and fourth placed Participating Club in each group shall be eliminated from the Competition.

11. Knockout Stage

- 11.1. The Knockout Stage shall consist of the Round of 16, Quarter Finals, Semi Finals, and Finals.
- 11.2. Each round of the Knockout Stage shall be conducted in accordance with the Match Schedule and played on a home and away knock-out basis.
 - 11.2.1. The Participating Clubs from the West Region shall be drawn to play each other in the Round of 16, Quarter Finals, and Semi Finals.
 - 11.2.2. The Participating Clubs from the East Region shall be drawn to play each other in the Round of 16, Quarter Finals, and Semi Finals.
- 11.3. The duration of Matches, including Extra Time and Penalty Kicks (if required), shall be played in accordance with the procedures described in the Laws of the Game, the Manual, and Articles 12 and 13.
 - 11.3.1. The Away Goals Rule shall only apply in accordance with Article 12.2.
- 11.4. At the conclusion of each tie in the Round of 16, Quarter Finals and Semi Finals:
 - 11.4.1. the winner shall qualify for the next round;
 - 11.4.2. the loser shall be eliminated.
- 11.5. At the conclusion of the Final:
 - 11.5.1. the winner shall be declared Champion; and
 - 11.5.2. the loser shall be declared Runner-Up.

SECTION 4: TECHNICAL REGULATIONS

12. Duration of Matches

- 12.1. The duration of Matches shall be played in accordance with the Manual.
- 12.2. The Away Goals Rule shall only apply at the conclusion of normal playing time of the second Match in any tie in the Knockout Stage. It shall not apply in Extra Time of any Match.

13. Extra Time and Penalty Kicks

- 13.1. If no winner is determined at the end of normal playing time during the Preliminary Stage, Playoff Stage or the second Match of any tie in the Knockout Stage, Extra Time comprising two (2) fifteen (15) minute periods shall be played.
- 13.2. Extra Time shall be played after an interval of five (5) minutes at the end of normal playing time. There shall be no interval between the periods of Extra Time.
- 13.3. If no winner is determined at the end of Extra Time, Penalty Kicks shall be taken in accordance with the Laws of the Game and the Manual.

14. Cancellation of Matches

- 14.1. For any match which is cancelled as a result of Force Majeure, the AFC Competitions Committee shall decide on the matter at its sole discretion and take whatever action is deemed necessary.
- 14.2. Any Match which is cancelled, except in cases of Force Majeure recognised by the AFC Competitions Committee, may lead to the imposition of sanctions by the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee against the relevant party that has caused the cancellation in accordance with the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code.

15. Abandonment of Matches

- 15.1. For any Match which is abandoned as a result of Force Majeure, the AFC Competitions Committee shall decide on the matter at its sole discretion and take whatever action is deemed necessary.
- 15.2. Any Match which is abandoned, except in cases of Force Majeure recognised by the AFC Competitions Committee, may lead to the imposition of sanctions by

the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee against the relevant party that has caused the abandonment in accordance with the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code.

16. Stadium

- 16.1. The Stadium to be utilised by each Participating Club shall be nominated in the Entry Form. All Stadiums must comply with the AFC Stadium Regulations and may be subject to inspection by the AFC. The AFC General Secretariat makes the final decision to approve any Stadium to host Matches in the Competition.
- 16.1.1. The Stadium nominated shall be the normal home stadium of the Participating Club for matches in its League, unless otherwise instructed by the AFC
- 16.1.2. The AFC reserves the right to refuse the nomination of a Stadium and require a Participating Club to play their Matches in a different Stadium within the same Venue or territory of its Member Association, or alternatively in a Neutral Venue in accordance with Article 16.3 and 16.4.
- 16.2. Each Participating Club must play their home Matches in the one and only Stadium approved by the AFC throughout the Competition.
- 16.2.1. A Participating Club cannot change Stadium during the Competition unless forced to do so because of circumstances beyond its control.
- 16.2.2. Should a Participating Club wish to change Stadium during the Competition, it must provide evidence to the AFC, including without limitation photographs, other visual evidence, and letters from the relevant authorities as to why the Stadium is unable to host Matches, at least thirty (30) days prior to their next home Match.
- 16.2.3. Only upon receipt of the evidence shall the AFC make a decision on whether the Participating Club may nominate a new Stadium for home Matches. Such Stadium must comply with the Manual and Article 16.1.
- 16.2.4. The AFC shall decide whether to approve the new nominated Stadium. Should the AFC be required to conduct an inspection, all costs shall be borne by the Participating Club and/or its Member Association.
- 16.2.5. Should the new nominated Stadium not be approved, or should a Participating Club be unable to play home Matches in their one and only Stadium approved by the AFC and not nominate a new Stadium, the AFC General Secretariat shall select an alternate Stadium in accordance with Article 16.1.2.

- 16.3. Participating Clubs who are required to play home Matches in a Neutral Venue shall comply with the matters set out in these Regulations.
- 16.4. If the AFC deems, for whatever reason, that a Stadium is unable to stage a Match or Matches, the relevant Participating Club shall propose an alternate Stadium. Should the Participating Club not propose an acceptable alternate Stadium by a deadline set by the AFC, the AFC General Secretariat may select a Neutral Venue to stage a Match or Matches.
 - 16.4.1. The Participating Club concerned is responsible for all Match arrangements for the staging of the Match or Matches, including all costs as set out in these Regulations. This includes Matches played in a Neutral Venue.
 - 16.4.2. Should the Participating Club not propose an acceptable alternate Stadium within any deadline set by the AFC, or refuse to partake in Matches in the proposed Neutral Venue selected by the AFC General Secretariat, it shall be considered to have withdrawn from the Competition in accordance with Article 6.
 - 16.4.3. The AFC General Secretariat makes all final decisions pursuant to this Article 16.4.
- 16.5. For any Match played at a Neutral Venue, the Host Club must organise and stage the Match:
 - 16.5.1. in accordance with these Regulations;
 - 16.5.2. in accordance with the Manual;
 - 16.5.3. in accordance with any instructions of the AFC;
 - 16.5.4. in cooperation with the Member Association on whose territory the Match shall be played; and
 - 16.5.5. in cooperation with the local authorities.
- 16.6. Participating Clubs shall ensure that no matches and/or other activities are held at any Stadium approved to host Matches in the Competition at least two (2) days prior to a Match, unless written permission has been obtained from the AFC.
 - 16.6.1. A Participating Club that fails to comply with Article 16.6 shall be fined at least USD10,000.
 - 16.6.2. The AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee may issue further sanctions in its discretion.

- 16.7. Each Match of the Final shall be played in a Stadium approved by the AFC with a minimum capacity of forty thousand (40,000) spectators. The Venue shall be decided by the AFC taking into consideration all logistical factors, including without limitation, accommodation and transportation.

17. Field of Play

- 17.1. If a Host Club considers the Field of Play unfit, it shall immediately inform the AFC, the Away Club and the Match Officials before their departure to the Venue.

17.1.1. A Participating Club that fails to comply with Article 17.1 shall be liable for all costs incurred for the travel, board, and lodging expenses of the parties involved.

- 17.2. The AFC Match Commissioner and Match Officials will inspect each Stadium prior to the Match and ensure that all arrangements are in accordance with the Laws of the Game. If the conditions of the Field of Play including the dimension of the goal and field are not in accordance with the Laws of the Game, the AFC Match Commissioner shall issue instructions for the Host Club to ensure rectification.

17.2.1. If, in the opinion of the AFC Match Commissioner and Match Officials, the instructions issued pursuant to Article 17.2 are not complied with by the start of the Match, the Host Club shall forfeit the Match in accordance with the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code.

18. Team Bench and Technical Area

- 18.1. A maximum of eleven (11) Participating Officials and a maximum of seven (7) Participating Players are permitted to sit on the team bench during a Match, provided they are in possession of the appropriate Accreditation Card.

- 18.2. The Host Club shall occupy the team bench on the left when facing the Field of Play when viewed from the Fourth Official bench.

19. Official Training Sites

- 19.1. Official Training Sites to be utilised shall be nominated in the Entry Form and subject to inspection and approval by the AFC General Secretariat. All costs related to inspection shall be borne by the nominating Participating Club.

- 19.1.1. The AFC reserves the right to refuse the nomination of an Official Training Site and require a Participating Club to nominate an alternate Official Training Site.
 - 19.1.2. Official Training Sites shall be situated no more than thirty (30) minutes or thirty (30) kilometres from the Accommodation of the Away Club, unless approved by the AFC.
- 19.2. Official Training Sites shall contain a fully equipped training field prepared to Match-condition.
 - 19.2.1. A Host Club that fails to comply with Article 19.2 shall be fined at least USD10,000.
 - 19.2.2. The AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee may issue further sanctions in its discretion.
- 19.3. Official Training Sites shall be made available at least two (2) days prior to the Match. They shall not be used for any other purpose during this period, unless written permission has been obtained from the AFC.
 - 19.3.1. A Host Club that fails to comply with Article 19.3 shall be fined at least USD10,000.
 - 19.3.2. The AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee may issue further sanctions in its discretion.
- 19.4. Participating Clubs must strictly follow the official training schedule decided in the Match Coordination Meeting one day (1) prior to the Match. The AFC shall decide the final timing of official training in the absence of an agreement on timing between the Participating Clubs.
- 19.5. All official training is open to the Media.
- 19.6. Should a Participating Club wish to close its official training to the Media, it shall, as a minimum, open the session for the first fifteen (15) minutes.
- 19.7. If an official training is held at a Stadium, the areas accessible by the Media shall be the same as available to them during Matches. Access to such areas shall be security-controlled by the Host Club.
- 19.8. If a Participating Club decides to not hold its official training at the Stadium, the new training site must be approved by the AFC Match Commissioner and comply with this Article.

20. Footballs

- 20.1. The footballs for the Competition shall be selected and supplied by the AFC.
- 20.2. Each Participating Club shall receive:
 - 20.2.1. fifteen (15) footballs for training prior to the Competition; and
 - 20.2.2. for each Match as Host Club, ten (10) footballs for each Match.
- 20.3. Participating Clubs are only permitted to use the training footballs provided by the AFC for training and warming-up purposes. Away Clubs are required to utilise the footballs as provided by Article 20.2.1 during away Matches.
- 20.4. Each Member Association and/or its Participating Club(s) are responsible for any taxes and/or fees pertaining to the customs clearance of footballs delivered to their Member Association and when travelling for their away Matches.

SECTION 5: TEAM OFFICIAL DELEGATION

21. Eligibility of Players

- 21.1. Each Participating Club shall ensure that all players:
- 21.1.1. are duly registered with the AFC pursuant to these Regulations; and
 - 21.1.2. are duly registered by the Participating Club with its Member Association pursuant to its transfer rules and those set out in the FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players.
- 21.2. Individuals who meet the criteria set out in Article 21.1 are Participating Players and eligible to participate in the Competition, subject to the provisions of the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code.
- 21.3. The AFC General Secretariat may decide to not approve the registration of a player if any of the requirements set out in this Section 5 are not met.
- 21.4. The approval of the registration of a Participating Player by the AFC General Secretariat does not automatically provide for the eligibility of the Participating Player. Each Participating Club is responsible for and bears the onus of fielding only eligible Participating Players in a Match. Failure to do so shall lead to the consequences stipulated in the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code.
- 21.5. A Participating Player shall be deemed ineligible, without limitation, if:
- 21.5.1. there is a violation of Article 21.1; or
 - 21.5.2. he participates in a Match contrary to a decision of the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee, these Regulations, or the operation of the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code; or
 - 21.5.3. the AFC determines that any document submitted during registration is false.

22. Stages of Registration of Players

- 22.1. There are three (3) stages of player registration:
- 22.1.1. Preliminary Registration (*cf* Articles 24 to 26);
 - 22.1.2. Player Selection List (*cf* Article 29); and
 - 22.1.3. Match Starting List in accordance with the Manual.

23. Registration Windows

- 23.1. There are three (3) registration windows for the Competition. Each registration window shall open on a date as communicated by the AFC. The registration window shall close as follows:
- 23.1.1. Registration Window 1: for Participating Clubs entering at the Preliminary Stage or Playoff Stage, fifteen (15) days prior to their first Match in the Competition;
 - 23.1.2. Registration Window 2: for Participating Clubs entering at the Group Stage, thirty (30) days prior to their first Match of the Group Stage;
 - 23.1.3. Registration Window 3: for Participating Clubs who qualify for the Quarter Finals, fifteen (15) days prior to their first Match of the Quarter Finals.
- 23.2. Participating Players and Participating Officials registered pursuant to the replacement provisions contained in Articles 24.4, 25.4, and 26.4 are considered to have been registered during the same registration window covered by those replacement provisions.

24. Registration Window 1 (Preliminary Stage, Playoff Stage, Group Stage, Round of 16)

- 24.1. Each Participating Club shall submit to the AFC via AFCAS its registration of Participating Players and supporting documents in accordance with Article 27.
- 24.2. Each Participating Club shall register minimum eighteen (18) and maximum thirty (30) Participating Players each allocated a playing number between 1 and 99.
- 24.2.1. Each Participating Club shall register minimum three (3) Participating Players as goalkeepers, regardless of the squad size registered. Playing number 1 shall be reserved for a goalkeeper.
 - 24.2.2. Throughout the Competition, each Participating Player shall wear the same playing number allocated during their first registration. Participating Players registered as replacements (*cf* Article 24.4) may only be allocated a new playing number.
- 24.3. If a Participating Club fails to register the minimum eighteen (18) Participating Players by the stipulated deadline, it shall be considered to have withdrawn in accordance with Article 5. Proof of submission by facsimile, courier and/or email will not be accepted.

- 24.4. Once the registration of Participating Players has been received by the AFC and after the stipulated deadline has lapsed, Participating Clubs may:

Preliminary Stage and Playoff Stage

- 24.4.1. No later than seven (7) days prior to their first Match in the Competition, replace up to three (3) Participating Players in the event that they are deemed medically unfit to play. The AFC shall receive:
- 24.4.1.1. a detailed medical assessment in English by a certified doctor. This assessment may be reviewed by a member of the AFC Medical Committee to confirm whether the injury is sufficiently serious to prevent the Participating Player from taking part in the Competition; and,
 - 24.4.1.2. the supporting documents of the replacement Participating Player as stipulated in Article 27.
- 24.4.2. No later than seven (7) days prior to their first Match in the Competition, replace or add up to five (5) Participating Players for any reason provided that the maximum number of registered players is not exceeded.
- 24.4.3. For the avoidance of doubt, a Participating Club may replace or add, subject to the relevant provision, a maximum of eight (8) Participating Players during this replacement period.

Group Stage (if qualified)

- 24.4.4. No later than seven (7) days prior to Matchday (MD) 1 of the Group Stage, replace up to three (3) Participating Players in the event that they are deemed medically unfit to play. The AFC shall receive:
- 24.4.4.1. a detailed medical assessment in English by a certified doctor. This assessment may be reviewed by a member of the AFC Medical Committee to confirm whether the injury is sufficiently serious to prevent the Participating Player from taking part in the Competition; and
 - 24.4.4.2. the supporting documents of the replacement Participating Player as stipulated in Article 27.
- 24.4.5. No later than seven (7) days prior to MD1 of the Group Stage, replace or add up to five (5) Participating Players for any reason provided that the maximum number of registered players is not exceeded.

24.4.6. For the avoidance of doubt, a Participating Club may replace or add, subject to the relevant provision, a maximum of eight (8) Participating Players during this replacement period.

Round of 16 (if qualified)

24.4.7. No replacement or addition of Participating Players is permitted.

24.5. A Participating Player registered pursuant to the replacement provisions shall not be eligible to participate in the Competition until he receives an Accreditation Card.

25. Registration Window 2 (Group Stage, Round of 16)

25.1. Each Participating Club shall submit to the AFC via AFCAS its registration of Participating Players and supporting documents in accordance with Article 27.

25.2. Each Participating Club shall register minimum eighteen (18) and maximum thirty (30) Participating Players each allocated a playing number between 1 and 99.

25.2.1. Each Participating Club shall register minimum three (3) Participating Players as goalkeepers, regardless of the squad size registered. Playing number 1 shall be reserved for a goalkeeper.

25.2.2. Throughout the Competition, each Participating Player shall wear the same playing number allocated during their first registration. Participating Players registered as replacements (*cf* Article 25.4) may only be allocated a new playing number.

25.3. If a Participating Club fails to register the minimum eighteen (18) Participating Players by the stipulated deadline, it shall be considered to have withdrawn in accordance with Articles 5. Proof of submission by facsimile, courier and/or email will not be accepted.

25.4. Once the registration of Participating Players has been received by the AFC and after the stipulated deadline has lapsed, Participating Clubs may:

Group Stage

25.4.1. No later than seven (7) days prior to MD1 of the Group Stage, replace up to three (3) Participating Players in the event that they are deemed medically unfit to play. The AFC shall receive:

25.4.1.1. a detailed medical assessment in English by a certified doctor. This assessment may be reviewed by a member of the AFC Medical Committee to confirm whether the injury is

sufficiently serious to prevent the Participating Player from taking part in the Competition; and,

- 25.4.1.2. the supporting documents of the replacement Participating Player as stipulated in Article 27.
- 25.4.2. No later than seven (7) days prior to MD1 of the Group Stage, replace or add up to five (5) Participating Players for any reason provided that the maximum number of registered players is not exceeded.
- 25.4.3. For the avoidance of doubt, a Participating Club may replace or add, subject to the relevant provision, a maximum of eight (8) Participating Players during this replacement period.

Round of 16 (if qualified)

- 25.4.4. No replacement or addition of Participating Players is permitted.
- 25.5. A Participating Player registered pursuant to the replacement provisions shall not be eligible to participate in the Competition until he receives an Accreditation Card.

26. Registration Window 3 (Quarter Finals, Semi Finals, Finals)

- 26.1. Each Participating Club shall submit to the AFC via AFCAS its registration of Participating Players and supporting documents in accordance with Article 27.
- 26.2. Each Participating Club shall register minimum eighteen (18) and maximum thirty (30) Participating Players each allocated a playing number between 1 and 99.
 - 26.2.1. Each Participating Club shall register minimum three (3) Participating Players as goalkeepers, regardless of the squad size registered. Playing number 1 shall be reserved for a goalkeeper.
 - 26.2.2. Participating Players shall wear the same playing number allocated during Registration Window 1 and/or Registration Window 2. Participating Players registered as replacements (*cf* Article 26.4) or newly registered Participating Players may only be allocated a new playing number.
- 26.3. If a Participating Club fails to submit its registration of Participating Players by the stipulated deadline, it shall be considered to have registered the same Participating Players registered for the Group Stage in the relevant registration window. Proof of submission by facsimile, courier and/or email will not be accepted.

- 26.3.1. In such cases, the AFC shall send an official confirmation form to the Participating Club to confirm the registration of the Participating Players for the Quarter Finals, Semi Finals, and Finals.
- 26.3.2. The Participating Club shall indicate which registered Participating Players are no longer validly registered with the Participating Club (e.g. they have retired).
- 26.4. Once the “AFC Official Registration Form for Players” has been received by the AFC, and after the stipulated deadline has passed, Participating Clubs may:
 - 26.4.1. No later than seven (7) days prior to their first Match of the Quarter Finals, replace up to three (3) Participating Players in the event that they are deemed medically unfit to play. The AFC shall receive:
 - 26.4.1.1. a detailed medical assessment in English by a certified doctor. This assessment may be reviewed by a member of the AFC Medical Committee to confirm whether the injury is sufficiently serious to prevent the Participating Player from taking part in the Competition; and,
 - 26.4.1.2. the supporting documents of the replacement Participating Player as stipulated in Article 27.
 - 26.4.2. No later than seven (7) days prior to their first match of the Quarter Finals, replace or add up to five (5) Participating Players for any reason provided that the maximum number of registered players is not exceeded.
- 26.5. No further replacement or addition of Participating Players shall be permitted.
- 26.6. A Participating Player registered pursuant to the replacement provisions shall not be eligible to participate in the Competition until he receives an Accreditation Card.

27. Documents for Registration of Players

- 27.1. Participating Players must be registered via the AFCAS online registration with the supporting documents set out in the Manual.
- 27.2. All Participating Players will be issued with Accreditation Cards authorised by the AFC. Should a card be misplaced, the Participating Club shall be required to pay USD1,000 as a replacement production fee.

28. Player Status

- 28.1. Each Participating Club may register three (3) non-citizen or foreign Participating Players. Each Participating Club may register one (1) additional non-citizen or foreign Participating Player who has the nationality of a Member Association.
- 28.1.1. Any Participating Player who has acquired citizenship (e.g. through naturalisation) and wishes to participate in the Competition utilising that nationality must demonstrate:
- 28.1.1.1. that the citizenship was acquired more than one (1) year before MD1 of the Group Stage of the Competition.
- 28.1.2. Any Participating Player who is eligible to represent more than one (1) Football Association on account of his citizenship and wishes to participate in the Competition utilising the nationality of a Member Association must demonstrate one (1) of the following:
- 28.1.2.1. that he has participated in an official competition for a representative team of the relevant Member Association; or
- 28.1.2.2. that he was eligible to participate for a representative team of the relevant Member Association in accordance with the FIFA Regulations Governing the Application of the Statutes at least one (1) year before MD1 of the Group Stage of the Competition.
- 28.1.3. Any Participating Player who does not meet the relevant requirements stipulated above shall not be eligible to take part in the Competition utilising that nationality.
- 28.1.4. A Participating Player cannot change his nationality of registration for the duration of the Competition.
- 28.2. A Participating Player shall be registered to maximum one (1) Participating Club per registration window.
- 28.3. A Participating Player shall be eligible to represent maximum one (1) Participating Club per Stage of the Competition. A Participating Player that has been fielded by a Participating Club in a Stage of the Competition cannot be registered for another Participating Club in that same Stage.
- 28.4. If a violation of Articles 28.2 or 28.3 occurs:
- 28.4.1. the Participating Player may be sanctioned with a ban on participating in minimum one (1) future edition of the Competition, unless he can demonstrate that extenuating circumstances existed;

- 28.4.2. the Participating Club shall forfeit any Match in which the Participating Player has been fielded in accordance with the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code;
 - 28.4.3. the Participating Club shall be considered to have withdrawn from the Competition in accordance with Article 6; and
 - 28.4.4. the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee may issue further sanctions in its discretion.
- 28.5. For the purposes of the contract of a Participating Player, his date of registration to a Participating Club shall be:
- 28.5.1. for Participating Players who transferred internationally to the Participating Club, the official date of the ITC submitted in accordance with Article 27; and
 - 28.5.2. for Participating Players who transferred domestically to the Participating Club or are a 'homegrown' player, the official date of the contract submitted in accordance with Article 27.
- 28.6. An ITC shall only be accepted after the close of a registration window where:
- 28.6.1. the Participating Club entered into a valid contract with the player prior to the close of the registration window and submitted this to the AFC; and
 - 28.6.2. (for Registration Window 1) a copy of the ITC or evidence to demonstrate that an ITC has been issued in accordance with the FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players is submitted via the AFCAS online system no more than seven (7) days prior to their first Match of the Competition; or
 - 28.6.3. (for Registration Window 2) a copy of the ITC or evidence to demonstrate that an ITC has been issued in accordance with the FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players is submitted via the AFCAS online system no more than seven (7) days prior to their first Match in the Group Stage; or
 - 28.6.4. (for Registration Window 3) a copy of the ITC or evidence to demonstrate that an ITC has been issued in accordance with the FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players is submitted via the AFCAS online system no more than seven (7) days prior to their first Match in the Quarter Finals.

29. Player Selection List

- 29.1. For all Matches, each Participating Club will receive a 'Player Selection List' on which the numbers and full names (last name, first name) of the Participating Players are listed one (1) day prior to the Match.
- 29.1.1. Each Participating Club may select up to three (3) non-citizen or foreign Participating Players and one (1) additional foreign Participating Player with the nationality of a Member Association on the Player Selection List.

30. Registration of Officials

- 30.1. Each Participating Club shall submit to the AFC via AFCAS its registration of Participating Officials and the supporting documents in accordance with Article 31 by the deadline stipulated for the relevant registration window.
- 30.2. Each Participating Club may register maximum twenty (20) Participating Officials.
- 30.3. Up to eleven (11) officials may be registered for each Match. The following two (2) Participating Officials must be registered on the Officials on the Substitution Bench Form by the AFC Match Commissioner:
- 30.3.1. Head Coach; and
- 30.3.2. Team Manager.
- 30.4. Each Participating Club may register any other nine (9) Participating Officials for any other positions, including without limitation:
- 30.4.1. Assistant Coach;
- 30.4.2. Goalkeeper Coach;
- 30.4.3. Fitness Coach / Trainer;
- 30.4.4. Media Officer;
- 30.4.5. Doctor;
- 30.4.6. Physiotherapist;
- 30.4.7. Interpreter;
- 30.4.8. Security Officer;

- 30.4.9. Video Analyst;
- 30.4.10. Technical Director;
- 30.4.11. Equipment Manager / Kitman.
- 30.5. Should the Participating Club nominate less than eleven (11) Participating Officials on the Officials on the Substitution Bench Form or the AFC does not approve the registration of any person(s) nominated, the number of Participating Officials permitted on the team bench shall reduce proportionately.
- 30.6. All Participating Officials will be issued with official eligibility cards authorised by the AFC. Should a card be misplaced, the Participating Club shall be required to pay USD1,000 as a replacement production fee.
- 30.7. For Registration Windows 1 and 2, should the AFC not receive the registration of Participating Officials in AFCAS with all required documents by the stipulated deadlines, the Participating Club shall be considered to have withdrawn from the Competition in accordance with Article 5. Proof of submission by facsimile, courier and/or email will not be accepted.
- 30.8. For Registration Window 3, should the AFC not receive the registration of Participating Officials in AFCAS with all required documents by the stipulated deadlines, the Participating Club shall be considered to have registered the same Participating Officials registered for the Group Stage and Round of 16 in the relevant registration window. Proof of submission by facsimile, courier and/or email will not be accepted.
- 30.8.1. The AFC shall send an official confirmation form to the Participating Club to confirm the registration of the Participating Officials for the Quarter Finals, Semi Finals, and Finals.
- 30.8.2. The Participating Club shall indicate which registered Participating Officials are no longer validly registered with the Participating Club (e.g. they have had their employment terminated or retired).
- 30.9. Once the registration of Participating Officials has been received by the AFC, Participating Clubs may replace any of the listed Participating Officials at any stage of the Competition no later than seven (7) days before a Match, subject to the provision of the relevant documents in Article 31. Only when a replacement Participating Official has received his Accreditation Card will he be eligible to participate in the Competition.

31. Documents for Registration of Officials

- 31.1. Participating Officials must be registered via the AFCAS online registration with the supporting documents set out in the Manual.

- 31.2. In addition to the supporting documents required by the Manual, Participating Officials shall provide via the AFCAS online registration the following evidence of their qualification based upon their function:
- 31.2.1. Head Coach; Assistant Coach; Fitness Coach; Goalkeeper Coach: as set out in Appendix 5 of the Manual;
 - 31.2.2. Team Manager: full-time employment contract;
 - 31.2.3. Team Media Officer: qualification in the field of communications or evidence of related experience and fulltime employment contract; and
 - 31.2.4. Team Doctor: relevant medical qualification.

32. Size of Delegation at Matches

- 32.1. Each Participating Club shall register a Team Official Delegation comprising of maximum eighteen (18) Participating Players and maximum of eleven (11) Participating Officials for each Match.
- 32.2. The Team Official Delegation shall be granted full access to all official areas, including the Field of Play and other necessary Controlled Accessed Areas, as determined by the AFC.
- 32.3. The Team Media Officer and Team Manager shall be responsible for coordinating all Participating Club and media-related matters with the AFC. They shall work in a full-time, exclusive capacity from two (2) days prior until one (1) day after each Match. They shall participate in all Official Functions related to Matches in the Competition, including without limitation the match coordination meeting and all press conferences.
- 32.4. Participating Clubs shall ensure that no unauthorised persons are permitted entry into the team dressing room, Field of Play, or any other Controlled Access Area requiring an Accreditation Card.

SECTION 6: LOGISTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

33. Arrival and Departure at Away Matches

- 33.1. Each Participating Club shall arrive at the Venue and report to the Official Hotel of each away Match in the Competition at least two (2) days before the Match.
- 33.1.1. Should a Participating Club wish to arrive at the Venue only one (1) day before the Match, they shall submit their request via official letter to the AFC with valid reasons and arrival flight itinerary details at least seven (7) days prior to the Match.
- 33.1.2. Should the AFC accept such a request, the late arrival of the Participating Club shall not interrupt the timing of Official Functions and/or the participation of the Participating Club in Official Functions.
- 33.2. Each Participating Club shall depart the Venue the day following each away Match in the Competition.
- 33.3. Participating Clubs shall not play in any non-official matches when travelling to and from the Venue of an away Match.
- 33.4. Should an Away Club arrive more than (2) days before a Match or depart more than one (1) day after a Match, it shall bear all the costs relating to those additional days in the Venue.

34. Travelling Costs

- 34.1. Each Participating Club is responsible for payment of all transportation costs (international and domestic) for their Team Official Delegation for away Matches from:
- 34.1.1. their departure from the territory of their Member Association (or any other location) to the Venue of their away Match; and
- 34.1.2. their departure from the Venue of their away Match.

35. Logistical Arrangements between Participating Clubs

- 35.1. Participating Clubs shall settle all logistical costs among themselves. The following provisions for each Match shall apply:

- 35.1.1. the Away Club shall cover its international and domestic travel costs to the Venue or the nearest airport as well as board, lodging costs and incidental expenses;
- 35.1.2. the Host Club shall cover domestic transport costs for the entire Team Official Delegation of the Away Club in the Venue;
- 35.1.3. subject to the relevant national law, where requested by the AFC General Secretariat or the AFC Match Commissioner, a police escort shall be provided by the Host Club to the Team Official Delegation of the Away Club for its travel to training, Matches, Official Functions, and airport transfers;
- 35.1.4. Participating Clubs are not permitted to stay at the same hotel or at the hotel chosen for the AFC Delegation;
- 35.1.5. any disputes arising regarding finances shall be resolved amongst the Participating Clubs and/or their Member Associations concerned. The dispute may be submitted to the AFC General Secretariat for a final decision.

36. Accommodation, Meals and Refreshments for AFC Delegation

- 36.1. Each Host Club must provide at their own cost for the AFC Delegation, from their arrival at the Venue of a Match until one (1) day after the Match:
 - 36.1.1. accommodation in an international five-star hotel different from the Team Official Delegations unless approved by the AFC (or an international four-star hotel if there are no international five-star hotels in the Venue);
 - 36.1.2. three (3) meals per day (international buffet style) and one (1) additional light meal on Match-day;
 - 36.1.3. minimum six (6) litres of water per person per day, as well as ice and refreshments, at the Accommodation, referee training, and the Stadium;
 - 36.1.4. daily laundry services (but no dry cleaning or pressing) for playing, training, and business outfits of eight (8) pieces per day per person for the Referee Assessor and Match Officials;
 - 36.1.5. daily laundry services for playing, training, and business outfits of six (6) pieces of normal wash per day and two (2) pieces of dry cleaning on alternate days for the other members of the AFC Delegation;
 - 36.1.6. a Club official or representative of the Host Club should be assigned to coordinate the airport reception, immigration and customs, airport

transfers, local transportation and accommodation for all AFC Delegation members and Match Officials; and

36.1.7. liaison officers proficient in English.

37. Local Land Transportation for the AFC Delegation

37.1. Each Host Club must provide at their own cost for the appointed AFC Delegation, from their arrival at the Venue of a Match until one (1) day after the Match:

37.1.1. one (1) sedan car for the AFC Match Commissioner;

37.1.2. one (1) minimum seven (7) seater vehicle for the Referee Assessor and Match Officials; and

37.1.3. additional vehicles upon request of the AFC General Secretariat for other officials appointed by the AFC.

38. Disciplinary Action

38.1. A Host Club that fails to provide for any of the matters set out in Articles 35 to 37 shall forfeit its Match Subsidy. In the event that the Host Club did not receive a Match Subsidy for the particular Match, the Host Club shall be fined accordingly.

38.2. The AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee may issue further sanctions in its discretion.

39. Submission of Match Recording

39.1. The Host Club is responsible to provide, at its own cost:

39.1.1. one (1) recording of the Match on DVD or USB flash drive for each Match played at its Stadium to the AFC Match Commissioner immediately after the Match; and

39.1.2. one (1) recording of the Match on DVD or USB flash drive for each Match played at its Stadium to the AFC latest the day after the Match.

39.2. The Host Club shall guarantee that the recording is of good quality and covers the entire duration of the Match. The recording shall not be delivered until it has been examined and approved by the AFC Match Commissioner.

- 39.3. A Host Club that fails to provide for any of the matters set out in Articles 39.1 and/or 39.2 shall be fined minimum USD3,000.
- 39.4. The AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee may issue further sanctions in its discretion.

SECTION 7: MEDIA

40. Media Access

40.1. The Host Club and its Member Association shall ensure that the AFC, the Host Broadcaster, and all Broadcast Licensees have free access to the Stadium from two (2) days prior to each Match until one (1) day following each Match, to allow for the resolution of any technical issues and for the assembly of the relevant infrastructure required to execute the Media Rights.

41. Press Conferences

41.1. The Host Club is responsible for the organisation of a pre-Match press conference to be conducted under the supervision of the Local Media Officer at least one (1) day prior to each Match it hosts in the Competition.

41.2. The Head Coach and minimum one (1) of the proposed eleven (11) starting Participating Players of each Participating Club must attend a pre-Match press conference for each Match in which they participate. The AFC shall decide the final timing of the pre-Match press conferences in the absence of an agreement on timing by the Participating Clubs.

41.3. The Head Coach of each Participating Club and the Player of the Match must attend a post-Match press conference for each Match in which they participate, commencing no later than fifteen (15) minutes after the Match.

41.4. Each Team Media Officer shall ensure attendance of the Head Coach and the relevant Participating Player(s).

41.5. Each Participating Club is responsible (if applicable) for the interpretation of its Head Coach and relevant Participating Players into English. Interpretation into the local language (if applicable) shall be the responsibility of the Host Club.

41.6. Any individual who fails to attend an obligatory press conference shall be fined at least USD10,000. The relevant Participating Club shall also be held liable in accordance with Article 3.3.9. The AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee may issue further sanctions in its discretion.

42. Mixed Zone

42.1. All members of a Team Official Delegation shall pass through the Mixed Zone on their way from their team dressing room to their bus after each Match.

- 42.2. Any individual who fails to pass through the Mixed Zone shall be fined at least USD10,000. The relevant Participating Club shall also be held liable in accordance with Article 3.3.9. The AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee may issue further sanctions in its discretion.

43. Interviews

- 43.1. If requested by the AFC, each Participating Club shall make their Head Coach and selected Participating Players available for an interview of up to ten (10) minutes, to be recorded by the Host Broadcaster or other Broadcast Licensees, any Official Licensee or Official Partner, or by the AFC Website.
- 43.1.1. For the Preliminary Stage, Playoff Stage and Group Stage, any such interview shall be conducted one (1) day before prior to the Match.
- 43.1.2. For the Knockout Stage, any such interview shall be conducted one (1) or two (2) days prior to the Match.
- 43.1.3. All interview locations shall be designated by the Local Media Officer or AFC Match Commissioner.
- 43.2. Any individual who fails to conduct an interview when requested shall be fined at least USD10,000. The relevant Participating Club shall also be held liable in accordance with Article 3.3.9. The AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee may issue further sanctions in its discretion.

44. Flash Interviews

- 44.1. Participating Players and Participating Officials are not permitted to give interviews at the Stadium without the express permission of the AFC.
- 44.2. The Local Media Officer may designate an area for multilateral and unilateral flash interviews to be conducted by the Host Broadcaster and the visiting Broadcast Licensee (if applicable) following each Match.
- 44.3. If requested by the AFC, any Participating Player and/or Participating Officials shall participate in a flash interview following each Match.
- 44.4. Any individual who fails to conduct a flash interview when requested shall be fined at least USD10,000. The relevant Participating Club shall also be held liable in accordance with Article 3.3.9. The AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee may issue further sanctions in its discretion.

SECTION 8: EQUIPMENT

45. Responsibility

- 45.1. The AFC has the sole authority to approve the equipment (including kit) set out in the AFC Equipment Regulations.
- 45.2. Each Participating Club agrees to indemnify the AFC and hold it harmless from any and all damages in the event that a conflict arises as a result of any endorsement deal existing between itself and its sponsor(s) which contravenes the AFC Equipment Regulations.

SECTION 9: TICKETING

46. General Provisions

- 46.1. Each Host Club shall be responsible for the production, distribution, and sales of all Tickets. The AFC shall provide a Ticket template design to all Participating Clubs.
- 46.2. Tickets shall include seat numbering and serial numbering, and only include those Competition Marks, and/or marks of Official Licensees approved by the AFC.
- 46.3. The Host Club and its Member Association must ensure that access to the Stadium is granted to the AFC Delegation, Away Club Team Official Delegation, AFC Commercial Rights Partner, Official Licensees, Media and travelling supporters without any discrimination on the basis of gender, race, or nationality.
- 46.4. The AFC General Secretariat shall determine the Ticketing policy for the Final.

47. Terms and Conditions

- 47.1. The AFC shall, in collaboration with Host Club and/or Host Association, issue special ticketing terms and conditions which are applicable to all Ticket holders

48. Complimentary Tickets

- 48.1. The Host Club and its Member Association shall provide the following complimentary Tickets to each Away Club:
 - 48.1.1. two (2) VVIP Tickets;
 - 48.1.2. five (5) VIP Tickets; and
 - 48.1.3. twenty (20) Tickets of the next-best category.
- 48.2. The Host Club and its Member Association shall provide the following Tickets for each Match to the AFC:
 - 48.2.1. fifty percent (50%) of the VVIP Tribune (including without limitation, royal boxes, sky or hospitality boxes and suites, or other type of suite);
 - 48.2.2. fifty (50) VIP Tickets;

- 48.2.3. four hundred and fifty (450) Tickets of the next best category;
 - 48.2.4. three hundred and fifty (350) Tickets of the second next best category;
and
 - 48.2.5. up to two hundred and fifty (250) Tickets to any Official Functions
and/or special hospitality facilities at the Stadium, subject to capacity;
- at the dates specified below:
- 48.2.6. Preliminary Stage: latest seven (7) days before the Match;
 - 48.2.7. Playoff Stage: latest seven (7) days before the Match;
 - 48.2.8. Group Stage: latest thirty (30) days before the Match;
 - 48.2.9. Round of 16: latest ten (10) days before the Match;
 - 48.2.10. Quarter Finals: latest thirty (30) days before the Match;
 - 48.2.11. Semi Finals: latest ten (10) days before the Match; and
 - 48.2.12. Finals: latest ten (10) days before the Match.
- 48.3. “Best Category” refers to the best Tickets available in the best category entitling the Ticket holder to sit in the sector immediately adjacent to the VIP area which in or directly opposite to the VIP Tribune.
 - 48.4. All Tickets shall be provided in a continuous block.
 - 48.5. The AFC shall be able to purchase Tickets at face value and on an individual Match basis for itself and Official Licensees from each Host Club.
 - 48.6. The AFC reserves all Ticket Rights relating to the Final. The AFC is entitled to request any additional Tickets, the number of which shall be communicated to the Host Club and/or its Member Association at the appropriate time.

49. Purchasable Tickets

- 49.1. The Host Club and/or its Member Association must make available at least five percent (5%) of the net saleable capacity of its Stadium available exclusively to the supporters of each Away Club, in a segregated, safe area to be determined by the Host Club and the AFC General Secretariat.
- 49.2. This allocation shall be comprised of a mixture of Category 1 and Category 2 Tickets. The number of Tickets to be purchased must be declared to the Host Club by no later than two (2) weeks prior to the Match with full payment by the

Away Club to the Host Club. The Away Club is responsible for all Tickets purchased, even if not utilised. The price of the Tickets shall not exceed the price of comparable Tickets that are sold to the supporters of the Host Club.

- 49.3. The Host Club shall provide the AFC Commercial Rights Partner with the opportunity to buy Tickets at face-value for each Match. The number of Tickets to be purchased must be declared to the Host Club by no later than two (2) weeks prior to the Match.

SECTION 10: SAFETY AND SECURITY

50. General Principles

- 50.1 All matters relating to safety and security shall be undertaken in compliance with the AFC Stadium Regulations and AFC Safety and Security Regulations.
- 50.2 Each Host Club and its Member Association shall, in conjunction with the relevant government authorities and/or Stadium owners, devise, plan, and implement adequate security and safety measures for the Competition at all Controlled Access Areas within the Venue and other relevant locations to protect all relevant persons, including without limitation the AFC Delegation, Team Official Delegations, AFC Commercial Rights Partner, Official Licensees, Media, and spectators, and all goods brought in by the AFC, Team Official Delegations, AFC Commercial Rights Partner, and Official Licensees.
- 50.3 Each Host Club and its Member Association shall issue a detailed security plan in the form of a binding agreement with, without limitation, the management of the Stadium, Official Training Site(s), and the Accommodation of the AFC Delegation and Team Official Delegations. This security plan shall be based upon the principles set out in the AFC Stadium Regulations and AFC Safety and Security Regulations.
- 50.4 Each Host Club and its Member Association shall discharge the AFC and hold it harmless from all responsibility and relinquish any claim against the AFC and the members of its delegation for any damages resulting from any act or omission relating to the organisation of the Competition to the exclusion of damages caused by AFC or the members of its delegation acting with intent or gross negligence

SECTION 11: MEDICAL AND ANTI-DOPING

51. Pre-Competition Medical Assessment

51.1. Each Participating Club shall ensure that each Participating Player undergoes a pre-competition medical assessment (PCMA) at least thirty (30) days prior to their first Match of the Competition.

51.1.1. Participating Players that have undertaken a PCMA for a FIFA or other AFC competition may provide the AFC with the physician and player declaration form originally provided to FIFA or the AFC, provided that the PCMA was conducted within one (1) year of the Competition:

51.1.2. The AFC shall provide all Participating Clubs with the PCMA form setting out the necessary matters to be tested, which shall include testing to prevent players from experiencing sudden cardiac death during any Match.

51.1.3. Each Member Association must submit to the AFC latest ten (10) days prior to the first Match of the Competition the following signed documents:

51.1.3.1. *“Member Association Declaration of Agreement to the PCMA”*;

51.1.3.2. for each Participating Player, the *“Player and Examining Physician Declaration for PCMA”*.

51.1.4. Any player for whom the required documents are not provided is not eligible to be registered for the Competition.

51.2. The AFC Medical Committee may, in its sole discretion, order any further medical evaluation of a Participating Player that it deems necessary. The cost of such further testing shall be borne by the AFC.

52. Facilities and Personnel

52.1 Each Host Club shall provide a medical room and doping control room fully equipped with all items stipulated in the Manual.

52.2 A Host Club shall be fined:

52.3.1. at least USD20,000 for failing to fully equip the medical room; or

52.3.2. at least USD10,000 for failing to fully equip the doping control room; or

52.3.3. at least USD40,000 for failing to fully equip both rooms.

52.3.4. The AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee may impose further sanctions in its discretion.

52.3 Each Host Club shall provide all medical personnel and doping control personnel stipulated in the Manual.

52.3.1. a Host Club shall be fined:

52.3.2. at least USD10,000 for failing to provide all required doping control personnel; or

52.3.3. at least USD20,000 for failing to provide all required medical officers.

52.3.4. The AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee may impose further sanctions in its discretion.

53. Anti-Doping

53.1 Doping is prohibited. The AFC Anti-Doping Regulations, the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code, and all relevant AFC directives in relation to anti-doping are applicable to the Competition.

53.2 The AFC shall inform each Host Club and its Member Association by means of a circular of the doping control procedure for the Competition.

53.3 The AFC Medical Committee shall be responsible for the approval of the WADA-accredited laboratory which shall carry out the analysis of all doping samples.

SECTION 12: DISCIPLINARY

54. Disciplinary Measures

- 54.1 All disciplinary measures in relation to the Competition shall be undertaken in accordance with the current AFC Statutes, AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code, and any relevant AFC circular.
- 54.2 The AFC may introduce new disciplinary rules and sanctions for the duration of the Competition. Such rules shall be communicated to the Participating Clubs and their Member Associations thirty (30) days before the first Match of the Competition at latest.
- 54.3 Only Participating Players and Participating Officials may serve match suspensions in the Competition. For the avoidance of doubt, this requires the registration of the relevant individual within a Registration Window in accordance with the deadlines set out in these Regulations.
- 54.4 All Participating Players agree to:
- 54.4.1. respect the spirit of fair play, non-violence, and the authority of the Match Officials;
 - 54.4.2. behave accordingly; and,
 - 54.4.3. refrain from doping.

55. Good Conduct

- 55.1. Member Associations are liable for the improper conduct of:
- 55.1.1. any member of its Team Official Delegation; and/or
 - 55.1.2. any person carrying out duties on their behalf throughout the Competition.
- 55.2. For any violation of Article 55.1, the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee may issue any sanction listed in the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code.

56. Administrative Procedure

- 56.1 Subject to the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code, for any offence set out in these Regulations with a listed minimum fine, where it is the first such offence committed by a party:

- 56.1.1. the AFC, after completing its investigation but prior to opening disciplinary proceedings, may write to the party and make an offer to compound the offence and reduce the listed fine by twenty percent (20%) should the party admit to the offence;
- 56.1.2. if the offence is admitted, the AFC shall submit the compounded offence to the Chairman of the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee for approval;
 - 56.1.2.1. should the party deny the offence, the AFC shall open disciplinary proceedings;
- 56.1.3. upon approval of the Chairman of the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee, the sanction shall be notified and applied administratively by the AFC;
 - 56.1.3.1 should the Chairman of the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee not approve the compounded offence, the AFC shall open disciplinary proceedings;
- 56.1.4. by agreeing to compound the offence, the party waives its right to request a motivated decision or appeal the sanction issued;
- 56.1.5. any sanction issued administratively comes into force immediately upon notification in accordance with the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code.

57. Cautions and Expulsions

- 57.1 All matters relating to cautions and/or expulsions, including the carrying forward of cautions between stages of the Competition, shall be undertaken in accordance with the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code except where expressly set out below.
- 57.2 Any Participating Player who completes the Preliminary Stage having only received one (1) caution shall carry-over that caution to the Playoff Stage.
- 57.3 Any Participating Player who completes the Playoff Stage having only received one (1) caution shall not carry-over that caution to the Group Stage.
- 57.4 Any Participating Player who completes the Group Stage having only received one (1) caution shall not carry-over that caution to the Knockout Stage.
- 57.5 Any Participating Player who completes the Semi Finals having only received one (1) caution shall not carry-over that caution to the Final.

58. Indiscipline or Violent Conduct

- 58.1 Any individual reported for any act of indiscipline or violent conduct at the Stadium (including without limitation within the team dressing room or on the Field of Play), Official Training Site, Accommodation, or any other location within the Venue of a Match shall be referred to the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee.

59. Protest

- 59.1 A protest is an objection of any kind to any matter that has a direct effect on Matches and any matters related to a breach of these Regulations or the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code.
- 59.2 Unless otherwise stipulated, to be considered valid, protests shall be:
- 59.2.1. submitted in writing on the Protest Form to the AFC Match Commissioner within two (2) hours of the end of the Match in question;
 - 59.2.2. followed up with a full written report, including a copy of the original protest, sent to the AFC General Secretariat within forty eight (48) hours of the end of the Match; and
 - 59.2.3. accompanied by a non-refundable fee of USD500 submitted within forty eight (48) hours of the end of the Match.
- 59.3 No protest shall be lodged relating to the Referee's decisions regarding facts connected with play. Such decisions are final and binding and not appealable, unless expressly otherwise stipulated in the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code.
- 59.4 Should the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee determine that a protest is unfounded or irresponsible, it may impose a fine.
- 59.5 If any of the formal conditions of a protest as set out in these Regulations are not met, such protest shall be disregarded. Following the completion of the final Match of the Competition, all protests shall be disregarded.
- 59.6 The AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee shall make decisions on protests. The AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee may transfer a protest to the AFC Competitions Committee for its decision if it is deemed to be purely operational in nature.

60. Arbitration

- 60.1. Any dispute in connection with the Competition shall be promptly settled by negotiation.
- 60.2. In compliance with the AFC Statutes, Participating Clubs, Member Associations, Participating Players, and Participating Officials are prohibited from initiating disputes in an ordinary court of law and must submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of the AFC.
- 60.3. Participating Clubs, Member Associations, Participating Players, and Participating Officials acknowledge and accept that, once all internal channels have been exhausted at the AFC, their sole recourse shall be to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). The Code of Sports-related Arbitration shall be applicable. The language of arbitration shall be English. Any hearing, if required, shall take place at the CAS Alternate Hearing Centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- 60.4. The jurisdiction of the CAS to resolve disputes is only available where it has not been expressly excluded or a decision is declared as final and binding and not appealable.

SECTION 13: ADMINISTRATION

61. Financial Matters

- 61.1 Where set out in these Regulations, the Participating Clubs shall settle costs among themselves in an amicable manner.
- 61.2 The AFC shall pay for:
- 61.2.1 the international travel costs and allowances for AFC Delegation;
 - 61.2.2 all doping control expenses; and
 - 61.2.3 the following insurances:
 - 61.2.3.1 medical insurance for AFC Delegation;
 - 61.2.3.2 personal accident insurance for AFC Delegation;
 - 61.2.3.3 travel insurance for AFC Delegation; and
 - 61.2.3.4 trophy insurance.
- 61.3 Each Host Club shall retain all receipts from the sale of Match tickets.

62. Match Subsidy

- 62.1 The Match Subsidy for Participating Clubs shall be made up of one or more of the following payments:
- 62.1.1 travel subsidy;
 - 62.1.2 performance bonus; and
 - 62.1.3 participation fee.
- 62.2 Match subsidies shall be sent directly to the Member Association of the Participating Club (s), unless otherwise directed by the Member Association.

Travel Subsidy

- 62.3 For each Match of the relevant Stage of the Competition set out below, the Away Club shall receive the corresponding travel subsidy:
- 62.3.1 Preliminary Stage: Nil

- 62.3.2 Playoff Stage : USD20,000;
- 62.3.3 Group Stage : USD30,000;
- 62.3.4 Round of 16 : USD30,000;
- 62.3.5 Quarter Finals : USD30,000;
- 62.3.6 Semi Finals : USD30,000; and
- 62.3.7 Final : USD60,000.

62.4 For the Group Stage, the travel subsidy shall be paid in three (3) installments after MD2, MD4, and MD6 provided that the club has fulfilled all obligations under the relevant Articles of these Regulations.

Performance Bonus

62.5 For each Match in the Group Stage, the performance bonus will be paid:

- 62.5.1 for the winner : USD50,000; and
- 62.5.2 for each Participating Club in the case of a draw: USD10,000.

Participation Fee

62.6 Each Participating Club shall receive a participation fee for taking part in the following Stages of the Competition:

- 62.6.1 Round of 16 : USD80,000;
- 62.6.2 Quarter Finals : USD120,000; and
- 62.6.3 Semi Finals : USD200,000.

63. Prize Money

63.1 The AFC will pay the following prize money:

- 63.1.1. Champion : USD3,000,000;
- 63.1.2. Runner-Up : USD1,500,000.

63.2 The AFC shall withhold five percent (5%) from the prize money of the Champion and Runner-up for AFC Social Responsibility activities.

64. Awards

- 64.1 The following awards shall be presented:
 - 64.1.1 Player of the Match for each Match;
 - 64.1.2 Most Valuable Player of the Competition;
 - 64.1.3 Top Goal Scorer of the Competition; and the
 - 64.1.4 AFC Fair Play Award for the Competition.
- 64.2 The Most Valuable Player of the Competition is awarded to the Participating Player who has a major influence on each of his Matches and the Competition overall.
- 64.3 The Player of the Match is awarded to the Participating Player who has a major influence on an individual Match.
- 64.4 The Top Goal Scorer is awarded to the Participating Player who has scored the highest number of goals in the Competition. Goals scored in the Preliminary Stage and Playoff Stage are not taken into account. In the event of a tie, the number of assists as determined by the AFC Technical Study Group will be taken into account to identify the winner. If there is still a tie, the total minutes played will be taken into account with the Participating Player with the lower number of minutes played ranked first
- 64.5 The AFC Fair Play Award is awarded to the Participating Club who has collected the most Fair Play points in the Competition.
- 64.6 The Participating Club may be disqualified if it or any of its Team Official Delegation is involved in severe misconduct during the Competition.
- 64.7 The AFC Competitions Committee may decide to introduce further awards.

65. Trophy and Medals

- 65.1 The original Competition trophy is presented to the Champion during the prize presentation ceremony and shall remain in the possession of the AFC at all times thereafter. The Champion shall subsequently be awarded a full-size replica by the AFC as its permanent possession.
- 65.2 The AFC shall award the following medals:
 - 65.2.1 fifty (50) medals to the Champion; and
 - 65.2.2 fifty (50) medals to the Runner-Up.

- 65.3 Additional medals may be produced upon request and at the cost of the requesting Participating Club.
- 65.4 The replica trophy awarded to the Champion must remain within its control at all times, and must not leave its region or territory of its Member Association without the prior written consent of the AFC. The Champion must not permit the replica trophy to be used in any context where a third-party (including without limitation, their sponsors and other commercial partners) is granted visibility or in any other way which could lead to an association between any third party and the trophy and/or the Competition. The AFC may issue additional trophy guidelines which the Champion must comply with from time to time.

66. Prize Presentation Ceremony

- 66.1 A prize presentation ceremony, managed and controlled by the AFC and coordinated with the Host Club, its Member Association, and the AFC Commercial Rights Partner, shall be held immediately after the final Match of the Competition to present the awards, trophies, and medals listed in Article 78.
- 66.2 The Participating Players and Participating Clubs that qualify to receive the awards, trophies, and medals are required to attend the relevant prize presentation ceremony. Participating Clubs shall be represented by the eighteen (18) Participating Players, Head Coach and one other Participating Official registered in the Team Official Delegation for that Match for the prize presentation ceremony following the Final. No other officials, players, or staff of the Participating Clubs may participate in the prize presentation ceremony.

67. Final

- 67.1 The Final shall be organised and managed by the AFC in collaboration with the Host Club and its Member Association, including without limitation:
- 67.1.1 Tickets and Ticketing in accordance with Articles 62.4 and 64.6;
 - 67.1.2 Protocol;
 - 67.1.3 Match organisation;
 - 67.1.4 marketing operations; and
 - 67.1.5 media operations.
- 67.2 Any additional events planned before, during and after the Final by a Participating Club shall be communicated at least seven (7) days prior and approved by the AFC.

68. Special Instructions

- 68.1 The AFC Competitions Committee shall, in conjunction with the various Host Associations, issue any instructions necessitated by special circumstances which might arise in the organisation of Matches.
- 68.2 These instructions shall form an integral part of these Regulations.

69. Decisions

- 69.1 All decisions made in accordance with these Regulations, except where expressly identified otherwise, are final and binding and not appealable in accordance with the AFC Statutes.

70. Amendments

- 70.1 The AFC reserves the right to make amendments to any part of these Regulations for any reason whatsoever. Such amendments shall be duly communicated in due course.

71. Force Majeure

- 71.1 The AFC Competitions Committee is the only body capable of declaring a Force Majeure event.

72. Matters Not Provided For

- 72.1 Matters not provided for in these Regulations shall be decided by the AFC Competitions Committee. Such decisions are final and binding and not appealable.

73. Closing Provisions

- 73.1 The AFC General Secretariat is entrusted with the operational management of the Competition and is therefore entitled to make decisions and adopt the detailed provisions necessary for implementing these Regulations.

74. Enforcement

74.1 These Regulations were ratified by the AFC Executive Committee on Wednesday, 9 November 2016 and came into force immediately.

For the AFC Executive Committee

President:

Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa

General Secretary:

Dato' Windsor John



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