



Embassy
of the Federal Republic of Germany
Wellington



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FOOTBALL'S 'OLYMPIC TORCH' VISITS KIRIBATI

From June 22nd until June 29th, The Ball, 'Football's Olympic Torch', will travel through Kiribati. The Ball is making its way around the globe from Battersea Park in London, where the first official football match was played, to Eden Park in Auckland, New Zealand, where the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup will begin on July 20, 2023. It is in Kiribati to explore gender equality through football and to investigate how this football-mad country is dealing with the existential consequences of climate change.



The Ball being signed by the U19 Kulas, the Fiji National Women's Team

As The Ball makes its way around the globe, it collects signatures from people who promise to support efforts to achieve gender equality and to take climate action. The team from the non-profit organisation Spirit of Football are the guardians of The Ball and have run 45 events and workshops that have been put on by 78 partner organisations kick-off on the 10th of July 2022 in London. So far more than 9000 people in 18 countries have signed The Ball and pledged to take action to make their communities stronger. Kiribati is country number 19 on the way to the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup in New Zealand and Australia.

The Ball in Kiribati – climate change and gender equality focus

The Ball's visit to Kiribati, one of the countries most affected by climate change, is an opportunity to galvanize national efforts towards a consolidated climate action plan based on Spirit of Football's principles of fair play and teamwork. The focus is empowering local communities who are knowledgeable about the local climate challenges and how to address

them. The concept of climate change custodians is not a new one, but in light of the increasing and widespread climate disasters the need to empower local custodians in a fun and innovative way is imperative. Spirit of Football will especially focus on women, who are often some of the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Spirit of Football's team will be running workshops with the **Kiribati Islands Football Federation (KIFF)** and their partners that foster discussion about fairplay, gender equality and climate change with women, youth and indigenous people to explore the role football is already playing and how it can increase its part to help make a positive social and sustainable difference in Kiribati society.

The Ball in Kiribati is being supported by the German Embassy in Wellington, New Zealand. German Special Envoy for the Pacific Island States, Ambassador Ms Beate Grzeski, is visiting Kiribati 26 - 29 June 2023 in order to gain a better understanding of the current situation, expectations and challenges in Kiribati, especially regarding climate change action. In this regard, Ms Grzeski said: *"I am delighted that my visit to Kiribati coincides with the One Ball, One World program as it complements my mission to bring Germany and the Pacific Island States closer together to address the shared challenges we face, most notably climate change. Football is an excellent example of how we can bring diverse actors together to achieve common goals. We only have this one world, and by working as a team, we can make a difference!"*

The Kiribati Ports Authority (KPA) is also supporting The Ball in Kiribati. Chairman Betarim Rimon said: *"We are supporting women in sports in Kiribati and to help Kiribati be seen in the global sport stage. This is one great opportunity to showcase to the world Kiribati being in the frontline of the climate change calamity."*

The Ball 2023 is also supported by the Swedish Postcode Foundation and various local partners in Kiribati.



The Ball's Schedule in Kiribati

Thursday June 22nd:

- Arrival The Ball in Tarawa, KIFF Executives to meet the delegation at the Airport and The Ball is signed by the KIFF President & Patron at the Airport.
- Traditional welcome at Eita Village, facilitated by Tarawa Urban Council (TUC) & South Tarawa Football Association (STFA), visit to TUC Council & meet Mayor, Councillors, Clerk & Staff
- Courtesy call to Government - HMWYSSA & Secretary, Chairman & Board members of the Kiribati Ports Authority

Friday June 23rd:

- SoF & KIFF Delegation observe the Police Day ceremony at Takoronga
- The Ball meets Betio Town Council and Betio Island Football Association (BIFA), introduction of The Ball & signing @ Council Office,
- Visits of Climate Change affected sites

- The Ball meets TUC & STFA, Cultural show, Demonstration & Entertainment and Signing of The Ball, Tenimaraoi Maneaba

Saturday June 24th:

- Workshop on fair play, sustainability and gender equality with FC & the community, at YCL Conference Center, Antebuka, Tarawa. Participants – Women, Girls, NGOs, FC and communities
- Official welcome ceremony of The Ball, delegation, and the Signing of The Ball

Sunday June 25th:

- Travel to North Tarawa in the afternoon

Monday June 26th:

- Visit to the Eutan Tarawa Council & North Tarawa Football Clubs Association (NTFCA) – Introduction of The Ball and signing.
- Workshop with North Tarawa Football Clubs Association on fair play, sustainability and gender equality, with women, girls, NGOs and FC

Tuesday June 27th:

- Return to South Tarawa early morning
- Workshops continue with STFA & BIFA - Workshop on fair play, sustainability and gender equality with FC & the community, at BTC Board room, Tarawa, with women, girls and indigenous people.

Wednesday June 28th:

- Visit to other Ministries & Sport Organizations – Sport Division, Kiribati Sport Authority (KSA), Kiribati National Olympic Committee (KNOC), Kiribati Just Play
- Meet with KIFF Executives & Kiribati Just Play committee.
- Farewell activity with The Ball

Thursday June 29th:

- The Ball leaves Kiribati for New Zealand and Australia.

The journey so far and next stops

Since March 2023, The Ball has been traveling through Southeast Asia visiting Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, before arriving in Fiji on June 7. From Fiji The Ball is travelling to Kiribati, before arriving in New Zealand and Australia for the FIFA Women's World Cup.



Prominent Supporters

The first person to sign The Ball on its 12-month global climate action and advocacy mission was **Katie Rood**, the professional footballer who plays for Hearts FC and the New Zealand National Team had this to say:

"Everyone loves the World Cup, but if we are to be able to continue playing it in the future, we need collective and urgent climate action. The journey of The Ball across land and sea from London to New Zealand is an opportunity for football to get its environmental act in order. I am going to take action. Are you?"

Spirit of Football's Ambassador and Liverpool F.C. manager **Jürgen Klopp** is also supporting The Ball: *"It is a ball for us all. Be part of our team. Everyone can play. Respect your teammates, your opponents and the environment. One Ball, One World."*



Do you want to be involved in the project? Follow The Ball's journey and [make your own pledge](#). To find out more about the non-profit organization Spirit of Football: <https://linktr.ee/spiritoffootball>

Background, Contact and Further Information

This is The Ball's 6th journey to the FIFA World Cup and the first journey to the FIFA Women's World Cup. Its previous five journeys all went to the FIFA Men's World Cup. To find out more about those journeys go here: <https://www.theball.tv>

The Ball was presented in cooperation with the United Nations **UNFCCC at COP 27** in Egypt in November 2022: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lRHtxL5wzjI>

Supported by the **FIFA Foundation** and the **Swedish Postcode Foundation**, Spirit of Football developed and tested educational resources with our partners **Pledgeball** and **Football for Future** focusing on sustainability and football from March to June 2022.

SOF has been using these resources running workshops on its **gender equality, sustainability and climate action** tour that began in London in July 2023. The Ball is being carried (and kicked) by a team of educators from Spirit of Football who are delivering workshops and running an advocacy campaign. Spirit of Football is a partner of **Festival 23** – the youth festival being organised by **Football United** (and Common Goal) in Sydney, Australia in August 2023.

The US Women's National Football Team (USWNT) singed The Ball and pledged for Gender Equality in February 2023: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMyqk_IHIOA&t=11s

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For more information, please contact:

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