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Kurdistan to host 2012 non-FIFA World Cup

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The fifth world cup for 'national' teams that are not members of FIFA will be held in Iraqi Kurdistan in 2012 with up to a dozen teams.

The fifth version of the Viva World Cup (VWC) was due to be held in 2011 but has been put back a year after the organizers, the NF Board, struck an agreement with the Island Games Association (IGA), which is being held will in the Isle of Wight the same year.

NF Board secretary general Jean Luc Kit said: "We decided to play the Viva World Cup every two years and when the Island Games will not be played in deal with the IGA. The IGA explained that they want to help us."

The Island Games is a biennial mini-Olympiad for islands and the football tournament at the last tournament earlier this year in the Finnish island of Åland saw the biggest entry yet with 16 teams entering.

IGA chairman Jörgen Pettersson agreed the deal at last weekend's NF Board general assembly in Paris, which was attended by more than 50 people. He said: "The differences [between the IGA and the NF Board] are pretty big. Our members are islands and well defined, the NF Board members are more of territories and often complicated to define. We will however do our best to help them in their work to provide competition for sportspeople. After all, that is what we all do."

The NF Board has visited Kurdistan, which took part in the 2008 and 2009 VWC's, and claims that the Kurdistan Football Association (KFA) has funding to host up to a dozen teams in 2012. For some cash-strapped IGA members, such as Greenland, the possibility of financial assistance to compete in Kurdistan could prove tempting – hence the deal in Paris.

"We went [to Kurdistan] and all the people, all the media, and the main cities want to host this competition," added Mr Kit. "The area is totally secure they will have money to host the 10 or 12 teams scheduled."

Kurdistan has a three-tier league, including a 16-team top flight, and the 25,000 capacity Franso Hariri Stadium in Erbil, and KFA representatives were among the more than 50 people at the NF Board assembly.

"[The KFA] did a presentation of their region and surprised me a lot having thought about the region as dangerous and poor," added Mr Pettersson. It is probably the other side around nowadays with two international airports and a Four Season Hotel under construction."

The NF Board assembly also included representatives of football associations claiming to represent Corsica, the Casamance region of Senegal, Provence in France, Wallonia, the Padania region of northern Italy, which hosted the third VWC earlier this year.

The football association from the Maltese island of Gozo was also in Paris and will host the next VWC from May 25 to June 2010 at the Sannat and Gozo stadiums. Also in Paris were representatives of footballers from Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony that was occupied by Morocco in 1975.

“A delegation of three people came from the [refugee] camps in Algeria,” added Mr Kit. “They are very motivated, worked hard and re full of contacts. Western Sahara has two sets of players in Spain and the Canary Islands at a good level.”

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