

PRESS STATEMENT

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Clifford Chance and the Centre for Sport and Human Rights release report on the 2026 FIFA World Cup candidate cities' human rights strategies

FIFA is in the process of selecting host cities in Canada, Mexico and United States

Washington, DC: Leading international law firm Clifford Chance and its pro bono client the Centre for Sport and Human Rights (CSHR) released today a report that provides an independent perspective on the human rights plans of the cities vying to host the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup matches. *The Promise of a Positive Legacy: The 2026 FIFA World Cup Host City Candidates' Human Rights Plans* provides an overview of the diverse and wide-ranging plans published by the cities to address the human rights impact of hosting the international event for each of 22 candidate cities in Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Compelling insights

The collaborative work by Clifford Chance and CSHR is an independent report recognizing highlights from each city's human rights strategy, providing a view across numerous human rights factors addressed by the cities, including anti-discrimination, human rights-related environmental impact, and workers' and housing rights. The report recognizes proposed initiatives to advance human rights promotion and protection at a city-by-city level, highlighting commitments made in the respective candidate city bids. It also identifies opportunities for ongoing dialogue and peer-learning within and among the cities and stakeholders.

CSHR experts worked with a team of 13 Clifford Chance lawyers from New York, Washington, DC and London to review and analyze submissions from all 22 cities, from three countries, over nearly a three-month period. The report's release comes in the run up to FIFA, the world's governing body of football (soccer), selecting the host cities and will complement FIFA's assessment of the cities' human rights plans.

The Promise of a Positive Legacy includes a compelling color-coded heatmap that offers an at-a-glance view of where cities have placed the greatest emphasis on human rights issues most salient to their own contexts.

The bidding cities

Vying for the hosting spots for 2026 are two Canadian, three Mexican and 17 US cities.

The US cities under consideration are Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Cincinnati, Dallas, Denver, Houston, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Miami, Nashville, New York City Metropolitan Area (including New Jersey), Orlando, Philadelphia, San Francisco Bay Area, Seattle and Washington. The report also offers analysis and highlights of the candidate Canadian host cities, Edmonton and Toronto, and Mexico's Guadalajara, Mexico City and Monterrey.

The report provides assessment in seven broad categories:

- 1) Anti-Discrimination & Inclusion
- 2) Environment
- 3) Freedom of Assembly, Expression & the Press
- 4) Housing, Property & Land Rights
- 5) Safety & Security
- 6) Workers' Rights
- 7) Complaints, Grievance Mechanisms & Remedy

Mary Harvey, chief executive officer of CSHR, says, "This report highlights a historical first: The FIFA World Cup 2026 in North America is the first mega-sporting event with human rights embedded right from the start, from the bidding phase onwards. We're all hoping it signals the dawn of a new era in the convergence of human rights and sporting events. Certainly, the awareness of issues around sport and human rights has never been higher."

Steve Nickelsburg, partner at Clifford Chance, says, "The FIFA World Cup is the most watched and most popular sporting event in the world. As a pre-eminent international law firm committed to justice and inclusion, Clifford Chance is proud to contribute to the development of this groundbreaking analysis as part of a process that aims to safeguard at-risk communities and ensure the benefits of the World Cup are shared as widely as possible. Beyond the 2026 event, we hope highlighting the creative ideas and approaches developed by host city candidates will inspire other cities and communities globally."

Clifford Chance and CSHR developed *The Promise of a Positive Legacy* from the human rights risk assessment and strategy each host city candidate submitted as part of their bids. FIFA required all candidate cities publish their own human rights strategies at the end of 2021, the first time that FIFA required such a process.

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For further information, or to speak with Mary Harvey or Steve Nickelsburg, please contact [Michael Jalili](#) at +1 917 208 2520.

About Clifford Chance

Clifford Chance is one of the world's pre-eminent law firms with significant depth and range of resources across five continents. As a single, fully integrated global partnership, we pride ourselves on our approachable, collegial and team-based way of working. We always strive to exceed the expectations of our clients, which include corporates from all commercial and industrial sectors, governments, regulators, trade bodies and not-for-profit organizations. We provide them with the highest-quality advice and legal insight, which combines the firm's global standards with in-depth local expertise.

About CSHR

The Centre for Sport and Human Rights is a human rights organisation for the world of sport.

Its mission is to advance a world of sport that fully respects and promotes human rights by generating awareness, building capacity and delivering impact. CSHR pursues its mission by upholding and promoting the [Sporting Chance Principles](#), engaging those affected and strengthening accountability through collective action in:

- Enabling Prevention of human rights violations linked to sport;
- Ensuring Remedy that is effective, accessible and available for those who experience human rights abuses; and

Harnessing Opportunities to promote human rights in sport that contribute to positive impacts and benefits for all.