

## Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, SA set for 2010

JOHANNESBURG: Didier Drogba and the Cote d'Ivoire team believe that Africa is on the verge of hosting an iconic FIFA World Cup and Drogba says his team will do everything they can to reach the final of the tournament next year.



"It is going to be a challenge. To make it to the final will not be easy because there are great teams like Brazil and Germany who have won the World Cup for many years. But my friends and I want to make history and want to change the way the world sees African football. We will do everything we can to get to the final and hopefully win it," Drogba said yesterday, 11 October 2009 at a press conference in Johannesburg, a day after Cote d'Ivoire qualified for the 2010 FIFA World Cup following a 1-1 draw with Malawi.

Cote d'Ivoire captain Drogba scored the goal that took the Elephants to their second consecutive FIFA World Cup tournament. They join South Africa and Ghana as the three teams from Africa who have confirmed their participation at Africa's first FIFA World Cup thus far.

The team, featuring players such as Drogba and Chelsea team mate Salomon Kalou, Barcelona's Yaya Toure and Arsenal's Emmanuel Eboué, and the President of the Cote d'Ivoire Football Association and FIFA executive committee member, Jacques Anouma, were welcomed at Johannesburg's OR Tambo International Airport by 2010 FIFA World Cup Organising Committee South Africa (OC) chief executive officer Dr Danny Jordaan, South African Football Association president Kirsten Nematandani and SAFA vice president Mandla Mazibuko.

With a host of international stars Cote d'Ivoire represents one of Africa's best chances for glory next year. Drogba expressed confidence in South Africa's ability to stage a FIFA World Cup he believed would change the perception of the African continent.

"I was here in South Africa for the FIFA Confederations Cup in June and everything was perfect. The stadiums are good and the people in South Africa are very friendly," said Drogba.

Nematandani encouraged the Cote d'Ivoire team to excel at the World Cup next year.

“Today is a good day to be an African. This World Cup has been dubbed an African one. What that means is that this World Cup (trophy) has to remain in Africa and that cannot happen without your commitment. We want you to commit to working very hard. You have already qualified and all that remains now is the final touches,” said Nematandani.

2010 OC CEO Dr Danny Jordaan used the opportunity to not only congratulate Cote d'Ivoire, but all the teams which qualified on an exciting weekend of 2010 qualifiers, which also saw Germany, Denmark, Serbia, Italy, United States, Mexico and Chile qualify for the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

“This weekend saw a decisive shift for the Organising Committee, away from stadium preparation to the real content of the tournament - the teams, the players and their performances. For this to truly be an African World Cup it is time African teams got to the final stages of the event, including the final. And this team, Cote d'Ivoire, is one of the teams that must carry the hopes of Africa. They have players from the best teams in the world, like Chelsea, Barcelona, Arsenal and Sevilla. This team has the quality and we ask the captain Didier Drogba to ensure this team brings us consistent performances which will bring them to the final stages. We wish you the very best and we want you to seize the moment in 2010,” said Jordaan.

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