In deciding to adjust the hosts of the Africa Cup of Nations in 2021, 2023 and 2025, after withdrawing Cameroon as hosts of the 2019 tournament, CAF and its president, Ahmad Ahmad, did not choose the easiest option but certainly made the best decision for African football.

It did not take long before the harshest criticisms sprung out. Unpopular decision for some and for others simply impossible but with just four months before the start of the tournament, CAF had to bite the bullet. A good, amicable and workable solution was found after Ahmad managed to convince Presidents of Cameroon, Cote d’Ivoire and Guinea.

CAF President Ahmad Ahmad, who is committed to the organization of AFCON with 24 teams participating under the best conditions, bravely faced the various critics. Through various means including face-to-face meetings with the leaders of Guinea and Cote d’Ivoire, Ahmad convinced the heads of states, to accept this proposal to change the dates of the hosting of the Africa Cup of Nations in their respective countries.

President Paul Biya of Cameroon, was the first to respond positively to the proposal of the CAF President, Presidents of Guinea, Alpha Condé, and Cote d’Ivoire, Alassane Ouattara followed by also accepting the changes.

President Ahmad Ahmad succeeded in the difficult assignment. These three countries are now facing the challenges of organizing AFCON, which has become even more demanding with the participation of 24 teams. The host countries will have to offer to the football world a competition without criticism of the host nation which will confirm the new dimensions of the African football.
Egypt is synonymous with history. We were champions in the first two editions (1957 and 1959), now we are making history as host of this exceptional edition with 24 teams, instead of 16. For the first time in history of the Africa Cup of Nations, the tourney will be held in summer instead of traditional January-February schedule. It's an exceptional tournament and we pray to God to grant us success that will make every African proud.

This edition will be the first with 24-teams and in summer. How special will it be taking into consideration it will be the fifth to be hosted by Egypt?

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EGYPT WILL BE READY – ABO RIDA

With 100 days approaching, how ready is Egypt to host the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations?

Hany Abo Rida: Preparations are going well as planned. From the onset, there have been daily meetings between the Local Organising Committee (LOC) and specialized committees to meet the timelines.

The preparations cover many aspects, including getting the six designated venues in the perfect conditions with respect to the pitches, changing rooms, tribunes and supporters’ areas. Another aspect covers the various training pitches and hotels that will welcome the qualified teams as well as transportation and reception for visiting fans.

We are also giving premium to media facilities at the various stadia to accommodate the expected huge media turn both local and international. Regarding ticketing, the process will be online to avoid congestion at sale points. Despite the limited time, we are working round the clock to be ready for the opening match on 21 June.

What surprise do you have for the rest of the world for the official draw ceremony on 12 April?

We are putting together a concept that will express Egypt’s past and future, and based on great history and civilization. The ceremony will be a mixture of Egyptian folklore and modern culture. We have decided on a venue next to the globally acclaimed Giza Pyramids, as it gives a clear picture of Egypt’s role in history and human civilization, especially that millions of people will watch the draw ceremony which is a great chance to promote Egyptian tourism.

Fierce battles with final AFCON places to be decided

The 24 countries to play at the Total 2019 Africa Cup of Nations in Egypt will be known this month when the final round of qualifiers are played across the continent.

While some slots have already been taken before the final round of qualifiers, several others are still to be decided as some groups are delicately poised with plenty to play for in the matches scheduled for 19-21 March.

The final ten places for the competition will be decided as Burundi, Comoros and Lesotho will be chasing history by grabbing their places in Africa’s flagship competition for the first time, following in the footsteps of Madagascar and Mauritania.

This means 14 countries have already qualified for the competition going into the final round of matches with several heavyweight slots being played across the continent.

Seven-time champions Egypt, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Senegal as well as Guinea, Mali, Uganda, Kenya and the two newcomers to the continent have already confirmed their places.

However, some of Africa’s top sides like Cameroon, DR Congo, Burkina Faso, Gabon and Congo have all to do in the final round of matches.

The match between Cameroon and the Comoros will decide who joins already-qualified Morocco from Group B as Malawi are unable to go through.

In Group G all the four teams have got a chance of qualifying with DR Congo hosting Liberia while Congo travel to Harare to face Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe lead the group with eight points, one ahead of Liberia while DR Congo and Congo have six and five points respectively.

Group K is also wide open are three sides are battling for the two slots. Guinea Bissau and Namibia have eight points each with Mozambique on seven points. Os Mambas will make a trip to Bissau while Namibia travels to Zambia who cannot qualify.

With Mali taking Group C’s first ticket, a fierce battle will take place when Burundi welcomes Gabon with the hosts needing just a draw to qualify for the first time. Burundi are second with 9 points while their opponents are two points adrift in third place.

Another tough assignment is in Group I where Angola (9points) and Burkina Faso (7points) will slug it out for last ticket. Palancas Negras travel to face Botswana while Burkina Faso host Mauritania who have already qualified.

Also in a similar position in Group D where Algeria have already secured their place which leaves Benin (seven points) battling Gambia and Togo, with five points each, for the other slot.

Three teams will also be battling for Group L’s remaining slot as Tanzania, Lesotho and Cape Verde all have a chance of qualifying with Uganda already sealing their place.

With Nigeria taking Group E’s first ticket, South Africa must avoid a defeat against Libya to qualify.

SIGNING OF THE AGREEMENT FOR THE TOTAL AFCON 2019

On 25 February, 2019 at CAF headquarters, Mr. Ahmad Ahmad, President of the Confédération Africaine de Football and Mr. Hany Abo Rida, Chairman of the Local Organising Committee and president of the Egyptian Football Federation, signed the Organising Association Agreement for the upcoming Total Africa Cup of Nations, Egypt 2019.

Commitments of the two entities with technical and financial specifications are defined in this 120-page document for the organisation of the competition which will be held in Egypt from 21 June to 19 July 2019.

As a reminder, the 24-team Africa Cup of Nations will take place in five cities: Cairo (two stadia), Alexandria, Ismailia, Suez and Port-Said.
AFCON ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

AFCON - NIGER 2019: MALI, CHAMPIONS FOR THE FIRST TIME!
Mali beat Senegal 3-2 on penalties to claim their maiden Total U-20 Africa Cup of Nations title following a 1-1 stalemate after extra-time in Niamey.
The Aiglons held their nerves in the pulsating shootouts to hand Senegal their third successive defeat in the final after losing 1-0 at home to Nigeria in 2015 and 2-0 to Zambia two years ago in Lusaka.

AWARDS
- Player of the Tournament: Moussa Ndiaye (Senegal)
- Top Scorer: Amadou Ndiaye (Senegal)
- Fair play award: Senegal
- Champions: Mali
- Runner-up: Senegal
- 3rd place: South Africa

AFRICA IN TRICKY GROUPS IN POLAND
Mali, Total U20 Africa Cup of Nations champions, were handed a tricky group at the World Cup when they drawn to face former champions France and Panama at the tournament to be held in Poland in May. The Aiglons were also drawn face Saudi Arabia in Group E of the competition as they seek to improve on their good performances in 1999 and 2015 when they finished third.

Runners-up at last month’s tournament in Niger, Senegal, were drawn in Group A to take on the host country, Colombia and Tahiti. Youssouph Dabo’s men will be seeking to improve on their 2017 showing when they were beaten in the round of eight.

In Group D, Nigeria will be making their 12th appearance at the U20 World Cup when they take on Qatar, Ukraine and the United States.

South Africa will face the toughest task among the African sides at the tournament as they were drawn in Group F against two former champions Portugal and Argentina while South Korea will prove always prove to be difficult against any side at the youth level.

The U-20 World Cup 2019 will take place from 23 May to 15 June in Poland, with at least seven matches to be played in each of the six host cities.
FIFA, CAF AND AFRICAN UNION SIGN HISTORIC MEMORANDUM

Following the 32nd Ordinary Assembly of the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, FIFA signed an historic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) (Monday 11 February) with the Confédération Africaine de Football (CAF) and the African Union.

The MoU, signed by FIFA President Gianni Infantino, Chairperson of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki and Confédération Africaine de Football (CAF) President Ahmad Ahmad will see FIFA, the AU and CAF implement common strategies and programmes with a focus on the areas of education, good governance and the fight against corruption, as well as safety and security at football matches.

CAF GS ACADEMY MAKES CASABLANCA STOP OVER

CAF organized in Casablanca from 25 February to 1 March a workshop for the general secretaries (SG) of selected member associations. In collaboration with UEFA, this workshop; the third in session and the first ever held in a French-speaking country, is inspired by UEFA’s Executive Master in Sports Governance. On its agenda were sports governance, sports marketing, legal and sporting affairs.

CAF CONDUCTS PERFORMANCE MONITORING WORKSHOP IN JOHANNESBURG

CAF, in partnership with Catapult GPS System organized a workshop which will see the African football governing body assisting the affiliated 54 Member Associations (MA’s) with the player performance technology in Johannesburg.

The four-day workshop which kicked off on Friday, 23 February is spearheaded by CAF’s Director of Football Development, Raul Neven Chipenda alongside Catapult’s Conor Branson, is one of many that will be rolled out to ensure that the continent is aware of the great benefits that come with the technology.

“Through this technology, coaches and trainers can now get live and accurate information about their players’ performances which will make training sessions and performance monitoring easier and more accurate,” said Chipenda.

CAF PRESIDENT AHMAD RECEIVES MALAGASY MINISTER OF YOUTH AND SPORTS

CAF President Ahmad Ahmad on Friday, 1 March 2019, received in audience the Malagasy Minister of Youth and Sports of Madagascar, Mr. Tinoka Roberto at the CAF Headquarters in Cairo, Egypt.

The meeting also afforded the newly appointed Tinoka to formally introduce himself to the leader of the continent’s football governing body.

The discussions focused primarily on the preparations of the Madagascar national team at the impending Total Africa Cup of Nations Egypt 2019, which will be first participation of Barea in the flagship African football tournament.

Accompanied by his Technical Advisor Hawel Mamod Ali, a famous football personality in Madagascar, Tinoka assured of the government’s support for Barea towards their continental campaign.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

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