CAS 2025/A/11738 Aminata Bangura, Slifa FC & Musa Mahmood v. Sierra Leone Football Association (SLFA)

ARBITRAL AWARD

delivered by the

COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT

sitting in the following composition:

President: Mr Lars Hilliger, Attorney-at-Law in Copenhagen, Denmark

Arbitrators: Mr David Casserly SC, Barrister-at-Law in Lausanne, Switzerland

Mr Kwadjo Adjepong OBE, Attorney-at-Law in London, United Kingdom

in the arbitration proceedings between

Aminata Bangura, Sierra Leone

First Appellant

&

Slifa FC, Sierra Leone

Second Appellant

&

Musa Mahmood, Sierra Leone

Third Appellant

All represented by Mr Paolo Torchetti, Attorney-at-Law in Valencia, Spain

and

Sierra Leone Football Association (SLFA), Sierra Leone

Represented by Mr Africanus Sorie Sesay and Mr Siman Allie Mans-Conteh, Attorneys-at-Law in Freetown, Sierra Leone

Respondent

I. THE PARTIES

1. Ms Aminata Bangura (the "First Appellant"), who is of Sierra Leonean nationality, stood as a presidential candidate in the SLFA elective congress on 2 August 2025 (the "SLFA Elective Congress").

2. SLIFA FC (the "Second Appellant" or "SLIFA") is a Sierra Leonean Premier League football club, which is a member of Sierra Leone Football Association. SLIFA was a voting delegate at the SLFA Elective Congress, represented by Mr Benjamin Gordon Esq.

3. Mr Musa Mahmood (the "Third Appellant"), who is of Sierra Leonean nationality, is the Chairman of Kambia District Football Association and was a candidate for one of the Ex-Officio positions on the Executive Committee at the SLFA Elective Congress. Also, Mr Musa Mahmood was a voting delegate at the same congress.

4. Sierra Leone Football Association (the "SLFA") is the national football governing body of Sierra Leone. The SLFA is a member of the Confédération Africaine de Football ("CAF"), which in turn is affiliated with the Fédération Internationale de Football Association ("FIFA").

II. FACTUAL BACKGROUND

5. The elements set out below are a summary of the main relevant facts as established by the Panel on the basis of the decision rendered by the SLFA Electoral Appeals Committee on 18 August 2025 (the "Appealed Decision") and on the basis of the Parties' respective written submissions, pleadings and evidence adduced at the hearing on 21 and 22 April 2026. Additional facts and allegations found in the Parties' written submissions, pleadings and evidence may be set out, where relevant, in connection with the legal discussion that follows. While the Panel has considered all the facts, allegations, legal arguments and evidence submitted by the Parties in the present proceedings, it refers in its Award only to the submissions and evidence it considers necessary to explain its reasoning.

A. Background Facts

6. In 2021, Mr Thomas Daddy Brima was elected as President of the SLFA.

7. The most important judicial bodies for the SLFA election cycle are the Electoral Committee, the Electoral Appeals Committee and the Ethics Board, and the electoral cycle is meant to commence with the election of these independent judicial bodies tasked with the mandate of providing checks and balances for the SLFA.

8. As part of their elections, the nominees are meant to undergo integrity checks by the Ethics Board.

9. However, and due to certain internal irregularities, the SLFA Ethics Board was dissolved by decision of the SLFA Ordinary Congress held on 5 July 2023 with plans to elect new members within three months at an extraordinary congress.

10. On 8 September 2023, the members of the SLFA were informed by the Acting General Secretary of the SLFA, *inter alia*, as follows:

"*Members can recall that the Ethics Board of SLFA was dissolved by the 2023 SLFA Ordinary Congress and a resolution was passed by the same congress to elect new members to serve in the Ethics Board at an Extraordinary Congress to be held within three months of the date of the SLFA 2023 Ordinary Congress.*

Based on the aforesaid, I write to request members of SLFA to nominate persons to be elected to serve in the Ethics Board of SLFA in line with Art. 12 Pa. c (To nominate candidates for all bodies of SLFA to be elected)

By copy of this letter, please be notified that the 2023 SLFA Extraordinary Congress will be held on the 28th October. The Venue and agenda will be communicated at a later date in line with the SLFA Statute."

11. However, the said Extraordinary Congress was eventually postponed several times, and finally it was decided to merge the Extraordinary Congress with the statutory Ordinary Congress to take effect in June 2024.

12. However, and apparently due to the closure of the SLFA office on the orders of the High Court of Sierra Leone in connection with a different case, also this Ordinary Congress was postponed and finally rescheduled for 5 April 2025.

13. Before the Ordinary Congress on 5 April 2025, the candidates for the Electoral Committee, the Electoral Appeals Committee and the Ethics Board submitted their respective Questionnaires for Integrity Checks to the SLFA.

14. However, based on the circumstances and the dissolvement in July 2023, no functional Ethics Board was in place to review these forms.

15. The Ordinary Congress on 5 April 2025 was eventually aborted and reconvened for 26 April 2025, during which the new members of, *inter alia*, the Electoral Committee, the Electoral Appeals Committee and the Ethics Board were elected.

16. Also on 26 April 2025, the Electoral Committee was set up.

17. On 5 June 2025, and while Mr Brima was still acting as President of the SLFA, the SLFA Electoral Committee issued the following SLFA Electoral Roadmap to the SLFA Elective Congress (the "Electoral Roadmap"):

"*5th June 2025 – Declaration of the Roadmap and Opening of Nominations*
15th June 2025 – Closure of Nominations
16th June to 8th July 2025 – Examination of Nominations
8th July 2025 – Communication of qualified candidates

9th to 12th July 2025 – Appeals submission
13th to 16th July 2025 – Hearing of Appeals
17th July 2025 – Communication of final List of candidates
18th July 2025 – Convocation of Congress (Elective Congress).
2nd August 2025 – Ordinary (elective) Congress"

18. Thus, the SLFA Presidential Election was scheduled to take place on 2 August 2025 during the Elective Congress.

19. In June 2025, Mr Brima and Ms Bangura submitted their respective nominations for their candidacy as President of the SLFA, and on 19 June 2025, the SLFA Electoral Committee announced the outcome of the examinations of candidates for the upcoming election, stating, *inter alia*, as follows:

"*After a thorough and impartial assessment, the Electoral Committee confirms the undermentioned candidates as qualified to contest in the 2025 SLFA elections subject to integrity checks by the Ethics Committee.*

1. Presidential Candidates

i. Ms. Aminata Bangura
ii. Mr. Babadi Kamara
iii. Mr. Thomas Brima
iv. Mr. Umaru Bah"

20. Following an invitation to do so, Mr Brima and Ms Bangura submitted their respective Questionnaires for Integrity Checks together with certain other documents.

21. By decision of the Ethics Board dated 18 July 2025 (the "Ethics Board Decision"), *inter alia*, the following decisions were issued:

"*95. Ms. Aminata Bangura is barred from contesting as president in the forthcoming SLFA Elective Congress, fined the sum of NLe5000.00 (Five Thousand New Leones) and banned from taking part in any football-related activity for a period of one (1) year, pursuant to Article 15(2) of the Code.*

96. Mr. Thomas Brima is barred from contesting as president in the forthcoming SLFA Elective Congress, fined the sum of NLe5000.00 (Five Thousand New Leones) and banned from taking part in any football-related activity for a period of one (1) year, pursuant to Article 15(2) of the Code."

22. Also on 19 July 2025, the Acting General Secretary of the SLFA issued the formal convocation of the Elective Congress scheduled to take place on 2 August 2025.

23. This convocation included a List of Candidates for the SLFA 2025 Elections issued by the Chairman of the Ethics Committee, naming the following candidates for the presidency of the SLFA:

"*President:*

1. Babadi Kamara
2. *Umaru Bah*"

24. Following the convocation of the Congress, the Electoral Committee sent out a notice to the SLFA members requesting them to submit the names of their respective delegates, which caused a number of disputes regarding the determination of the delegates of various SLFA members.

25. On 1 August 2025, the final list of delegates for the Congress was drafted by the Electoral Committee, based on which, the Acting General Secretary received several letters of complaint.

26. The Electoral Committee was tasked with addressing these complaints and deciding on the delegates, which decision was discussed with the FIFA representatives, who attended the Congress.

27. Both Mr Brima and Ms Bangura brought appeals before the CAS in order to have the Ethics Board Decision overturned.

28. Based on a request for provisional measures brought before the CAS by Ms Bangura, and by CAS Order on Provisional Measures of 31 July 2025, Ms Bangura was "*declared eligible to stand in the presidential election of the Sierra Leone Football Association, to be held on 2 August 2025.*"

29. Thus, Ms Bangura stood in the presidential election as a presidential candidate.

30. However, based on the fact that Mr Brima had been banned from all football-related activities, the SLFA did not have a President in office during the Congress on 2 August 2025.

31. Moreover, and apparently without any previous warning or explanation, the First Vice-President failed to attend the Congress on 2 August 2025.

32. Nevertheless, and following a meeting between members of the Executive Committee, which also had FIFA representatives present, it was decided to proceed with the Elective Congress pursuant to the SLFA Standing Orders of Congress and with the Second Vice-President, Mr Tarawally presiding over it.

33. An objection was raised concerning the Second Vice-President presiding over the Congress as he was also a candidate, which objection was eventually declared moot. Moreover, the decision to proceed with the Second Vice-President presiding was eventually confirmed by a majority of the delegates.

34. Following this decision, a disturbance occurred and the police and/or security forces were subsequently called and removed Mr Gordon from the Congress. Mr Gordon was later on arrested and did not participate in the elections. Thus, Mr Gordon did not participate in the presidential election.

35. Eventually, the SLFA Elections were held at the Congress and Mr Kamara won the presidential election with 43 votes, whereas Ms Bangura received 11 votes. The third presidential candidate, Mr Bah, withdrew from the presidential elections.

36. It is not disputed that the ballot papers used for the presidential election were serial numbered. However, according to the SLFA, the ballots, except for the first three ballots, were mixed up before they were allocated to delegates in order to ensure that the delegates were not given ballots based on their respective numbers on the voter lists.

B. Proceedings before the SLFA Electoral Appeals Committee

37. Following the Congress, the Appellants lodged appeals before the SLFA Electoral Appeals Committee asserting that that the Congress was marred by significant statutory violations, procedural improprieties, abuses of rights and breaches of fundamental governance principles, rendering the electoral process and its outcomes invalid.

38. The Appellants all claimed that political manipulation tainted the process and sought a declaration that the Congress and elections are null and void, a fresh Congress and election, sanctions to establish future safeguards, costs borne by the SLFA and any further relief deemed just.

39. In its response, SLFA submitted that the Congress and elections complied with the SLFA Constitution, the SLFA Electoral Code and democratic principles.

40. The Electoral Appeals Committee initially established that the burden of proof was on the Appellants to demonstrate, with concrete evidence, that the alleged irregularities occurred and materially affected the fairness or outcome of the 2 August 2025 election. Moreover, the Electoral Appeals Committee established that the SLFA, as respondent, must substantiate its defences to rebut these claims, particularly where statutory compliance or serious misconduct is in question.

41. The Electoral Committee then went on and identified the following seven key issues for determination: i) improper convening of the Congress, ii) late release of the voter list, iii) illegal delegate replacements, iv) assault and voter suppression, v) breach of ballot secrecy, vi) agenda violations, and vii) SLIFA's allegations regarding the 26 April 2025 Congress and committee composition.

42. With regard to i), the allegedly improper convening of the Congress, the Electoral Appeals Committee observed that while the SLFA Constitution does not expressly address temporary delegation of the chair in circumstances short of death or prolonged incapacity, the Standing Orders provide a practical mechanism for ensuring continuity.

43. The Electoral Appeals Committee found that the delegate vote represents a democratic endorsement of the arrangement and that the Appellants have adduced no countervailing evidence, whether by way of communications, formal records, or witness testimony, to disprove the SLFA's account of the President's disqualification or to explain the First Vice-President's absence.

44. While the convening process raised legitimate questions about strict compliance with Articles 37 paras 3 and 5 of the SLFA Constitution, the absence of proof to the contrary, coupled with the endorsement by the majority of delegates, mitigates the irregularity. This ground does not justify nullification of the Elective Congress. Nonetheless, the Electoral Appeals Committee strongly recommended that the SLFA amends its Constitution to provide explicit provisions for the delegation of the chair in the future in circumstances where the President and First Vice-President are unavailable, thereby avoiding ambiguity. It is illogical for the First Vice-President to be permitted to preside as a candidate, but for the Second Vice-President to be prohibited from doing so in the same situation.

45. With regard to ii), the alleged late release of the voter list, the Electoral Appeals Committee noted that the Electoral Code does not specify a timeline for voter list distribution, which supports the SLFA's position. Moreover, no specific evidence had been adduced to show how the late release materially prejudiced any candidate. As a result, this issue alone was not a ground for any nullification of the results.

46. However, the Electoral Appeals Committee recommended the introduction of clear rules requiring publication of the voter list at least 48 hours in advance to allow for meaningful verification.

47. Concerning iii), the allegedly illegal delegate replacements, the Electoral Appeals Committee observed that, while several protests submitted by certain football associations allege irregularities, the Appellants did not discharge their burden of proof. Specifically, they failed to provide concrete evidence – such as initial and final delegates lists or documented objections – that substantiate claims of improper substitutions or bias.

48. Furthermore, as noted by the SLFA, there have been no appeals filed regarding the decisions of the Electoral Committee, despite some protests indicating an intention to pursue such options. Consequently, the Electoral Appeals Committee found that the SLFA's reliance on Article 6 (i & j) of the Electoral Code is valid. There is no evidence to suggest that the replacement of delegates materially influenced the outcome of the process. Therefore, this ground was dismissed.

49. With regard to iv), the assault and alleged voter suppression, the Electoral Appeals Committee initially noted that this was one of the most serious matters raised by the Appellants and that video evidence in fact showed Mr Benjamin Gordon Esq., a duly accredited delegate, being forcibly removed from the Congress Hall, arrested and denied his right to vote.

50. Such allegations, if proven, strike at the very heart of the democratic principles safeguarded under Article 21 para 1 (d) of the Electoral Code.

51. It was noted that the SLFA denied responsibility, asserting that the incident was solely the action of the independent Sierra Leone Police Force, and noting that no formal protest was lodged during the Congress itself. And while the Electoral Appeals Committee accepts that the Police Force operates independently, it found this argument incomplete. The SLFA, as organiser of the Congress, retains a duty of care to ensure that all accredited delegates can participate in proceedings without fear of physical harm or arbitrary exclusion, irrespective of whether external security forces are involved.

52. The Electoral Appeals Committee unequivocally condemned the forceful eviction and manhandling of Mr Gordon and found that the explanation that he was being "*rowdy*" is wholly insufficient to justify the level of force alleged. In any functioning democracy, the raising of procedural objections must be addressed through lawful and proportionate means, not by physical ejection and denial of voting rights. As such, the Electoral Appeals Committee urged the SLFA to engage constructively with Mr Gordon to address the incident, which may include restorative measures deemed appropriate by the parties involved, without prejudice to any legal rights Mr Gordon may pursue independently

53. However, the Electoral Appeals Committee found, nevertheless, that the Appellants had not produced corroborative evidence, such as contemporaneous medical reports, or sworn witness affidavits, to substantiate the full extent of the alleged injuries or to demonstrate a pattern of broader voter intimidation. In the absence of such proof and given that only one vote was excluded in a contest decided by a clear margin of 43 to 11, the Electoral Appeals Committee could not conclude that Mr Gordon's exclusion materially altered the outcome of the election.

54. The incident nonetheless warranted urgent remedial action and the Electoral Appeals Committee directed that the SLFA establish clear protocols governing the role of security personnel at Congresses, ensuring that any removal of a delegate is authorised by the Chair and carried out in a proportionate and lawful manner. Moreover, the Electoral Appeals Committee directed that the matter be referred to the Independent Police Complaints Board (IPCB) for investigation.

55. As regards the absence of Mr Mohamed Kallon, the First Vice-President, the Electoral Appeals Committee noted that several assertions were made as to the reasons for his non-participation. However, neither of the parties called him as a witness or submitted a written statement from him. In the absence of credible first-hand evidence, the Electoral Appeals Committee could not attach weight to these claims. In any event, even if he had voted, the result would not have been materially affected.

56. Concerning v), the alleged breach of ballot secrecy, the Electoral Appeals Committee noted that while Appellants 1 and 3 argued that serialised ballots violated Article 21 para 1 (d) of the Electoral Code, the SLFA submitted that serialisation was an anti-fraud measure, with ballots cut and mixed in a box to ensure secrecy, and that candidates' agents observed transparent counting.

57. The Electoral Appeals Committee found the SLFA's remedial actions credible, as the Appellants have not provided evidence showing that votes were traceable or that delegates were intimidated.

58. The voter list signing process, once for ballot collection and once after voting, appears administrative and does not breach secrecy, based on which this ground was found to fail.

59. However, the Electoral Appeals Committee urged the SLFA in the future to adopt alternative anti-fraud measures in order to avoid any perception of compromised secrecy.

60. With regard to vi) the alleged agenda violation, the First Appellant alleged that agenda items under Article 27 para 2 of the SLFA Constitution were rushed or omitted, while the SLFA counters that the agenda was adopted by delegates, with adjustments authorised by consensus pursuant to 27 para 3 of the SLFA Constitution and that no objections were recorded in this regard.

61. The Electoral Appeals Committee found that the SLFA's position that all items were addressed, supported by the absence of contemporaneous objections, is persuasive based on which this ground failed due to lack of substantiation.

62. Finally, with regard to vii) the Second Appellant's allegations regarding the 26 April 2025 Congress and committee composition, the Appellants contended that no elections were conducted for the Chairpersons of the Judicial Bodies at the Congress, contrary to the requirements of Article 60 para 5 of the SLFA Constitution, which mandates such elections. They also argued that integrity checks for members of the judicial bodies were carried out by the Executive Committee rather than the body mandated by Article 60 para 3 of the SLFA Constitution. The Appellants claimed that this non-compliance violates mandatory statutory provisions and compromises the independence of SLFA's judicial bodies, thereby rendering the Congress unlawful.

63. The SLFA, on its side, produced the minutes of the Congress held on April 26, which clearly indicated that elections for the chairpersons of the Ethics Committee and the Electoral Committee were conducted, and further asserted that these chairpersons were duly elected and that the integrity checks were authorised by the Executive Committee under Article 82 of the SLFA Constitution of 2019. This article states that "*Any matter not provided for under these statutes or cases of majeure shall be settled by the Executive Committee, whose decisions shall be final.*"

64. The Electoral Appeals Committee found that what the Appellants failed to disclose was that, in this particular instance, the circumstances surrounding the April 26 Congress were amounting to a case of force majeure. At that time, all judicial bodies of the SLFA, including the Ethics Committee, had been disbanded. Therefore, a decision had to be made regarding who would conduct the integrity checks. This decision was reached by the Executive Committee pursuant to Article 82 of the SLFA Constitution, which confers such authority and finality on their decisions. Furthermore, a representative of SLIFA was present at the Congress, and no objections were recorded in the minutes.

The failure of SLIFA to provide evidence, such as the evidence of objections during or subsequent to the Congress of 26 April 2025, weakens their claim significantly.

65. Moreover, the FIFA Statutes emphasise independence and impartiality in governance but do not explicitly prohibit public or civil servants from holding positions on football association committees. Article 19 of the judicial FIFA Statutes outlines the eligibility of officials for committees, requiring that members of bodies (e.g. ethics committees) and governance-related committees (e.g. electoral committees) act independently and avoid conflicts of interest. However, this article does not specifically address civil service employment as a disqualifying factor.

66. Article 13 of the CAF Statutes emphasises that member associations must manage their affairs independently, free from undue influence, including from government entities. This is reinforced by the CAF Disciplinary Code (2018), which defines "officials" broadly (e.g. managers, coaches, medical staff) but does not explicitly exclude public servants from committee roles.

67. Article 3 para 4 (c) of the Electoral Code and Article 5 of the Ethics Code address the conduct of committee members concerning conflicts of interest. Specifically, Article 3 para 3 (c) stipulates that members of the Electoral Committee must immediately decline to give an opinion and withdraw from ongoing matters if they are government officials of any kind. However, this provision does not explicitly prohibit civil servants or government officials from serving as members of the committee. In the Electoral Appeals Committee's interpretation, the purpose of this article is to prevent members with a conflict of interest – such as government officials – from participating in giving opinions on matters where their impartiality could be compromised, and to ensure they withdraw when a conflict arises.

68. Similarly, Article 5 of the Ethics Code aims to safeguard against conflicts of interest among committee members; it does not explicitly bar government officials from holding committee positions.

69. The Appellants have not provided any evidence to demonstrate that the Chairpersons of the Electoral Committee and the Ethics Committee were conflicted or lacked impartiality due to their status as civil servants. Without such evidence, the claim that their membership constitutes a conflict of interest cannot be substantiated.

70. It was claimed that objections were taken at their time of the election of the respective chairs. Those objections seem to be more about whether integrity tests were conducted. It begs the question why this objection was only raised after the elections.

71. The Electoral Appeals Committee found that the SLFA's "fresh step" argument that SLIFA's participation waived objections had merit here, and, thus, this ground also failed.

72. Based on the above, on 18 August 2025, the Electoral Appeals Committee decided as follows in the Appealed Decision:

"*Resolution of the Appeals*

The Committee must determine whether the alleged irregularities, individually or cumulatively, materially affected the election's integrity or outcome, justifying the relief sought. The decisive vote margin, 43-11, places a high burden on the appellants to demonstrate prejudice.

Insufficient evidence exists to declare the 2 August 2025 Congress and elections null and void, as the appellants have not demonstrated that the irregularities materially altered the outcome. Nevertheless, the Committee acknowledges serious concerns regarding the convening process and Gordon's assault.

The Committee makes the following orders:

1. *The request to declare the Congress and elections null and void is dismissed, as the appellants have not provided sufficient evidence to prove that the alleged violations materially affected the election's integrity or outcome.*

2. *The SLFA is directed to establish safeguards for future elections, including:*

   (a) *clear protocols for delegate list compilation and distribution at least 48 hours before voting to allow verification.*

   (b) *mandatory documentation of leadership absences and delegation processes, filed with the Secretariat; and*

   (c) *measures to ensure delegate safety, including written agreements with the Sierra Leone Police Force to prevent interference during Congress.*

3. *The SLFA is ordered to refer the assault on Benjamin Gordon Esq. to the Independent Police Complaints Board (IPCB) for an independent investigation, to be completed within 90 days, with findings reported to the Committee. The SLFA must establish clear procedures to ensure police conduct supports, rather than undermines, democratic processes.*

4. *Each party shall bear its own costs, as the appeals raised valid concerns but lacked sufficient evidence for full relief.*

5. *No additional orders are deemed necessary, as the election results stand, and the directed safeguards address future governance concerns.*"

III. SUMMARY OF THE ARBITRAL PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE CAS

73. On 8 September 2025, the Appellants filed their joint Statement of Appeal in accordance with Articles R47 and R48 of the CAS Code of Sports-related Arbitration (the "CAS

Code") against the Appealed Decision rendered by the SLFA Electoral Appeals Committee.

74. On 13 October 2025, and following a granted extension of the deadline, the Appellants filed their joint Appeal Brief in accordance with Article R51 of the CAS Code. The Appeal Brief contained a request for production of documents.

75. On 9 December 2025, the Parties were informed by the CAS Court Office that, pursuant to Articles R33, R52, R53 and R54 of the CAS Code, the Panel had been constituted as follows:

President: Mr Lars Hilliger, Attorney-at-Law in Copenhagen, Denmark
Arbitrators: Mr David Casserly SC, Barrister-at-Law in Lausanne, Switzerland
Mr Kwadjo Adjepong OBE, Attorney-at-Law in London, United Kingdom

76. On 7 January 2026, and following several granted extensions of its deadline, the Respondent filed its Answer in accordance with Article R55 of the CAS Code. According to the Respondent, the Answer and its exhibits fulfilled the Appellants' request for production of documents, except for the Minutes of the 2 August 2025 Congress, which, according to the Respondent, were not final at the time of filing the Answer.

77. By letter of 15 January 2026, the Appellant informed the CAS Court Office, *inter alia*, that "*there are some outstanding evidentiary issues between the parties, however this can be addressed at the oral hearing of this matter.*"

78. All Parties signed and returned the Order of Procedure.

79. By letter of 16 April 2026, the Appellants wrote, *inter alia*, as follows to the CAS Court Office*:*

"*The Appellants wish to include Mr. Thomas Brima to be added as an observer to the hearing. The case concerns the 2025 SLFA presidential elections. Mr. Brima was the SLFA President in the previous term and applied to be considered as a candidate in the 2025 elections that is the subject of this appeal. He was found ineligible by the SLFA and did not stand in the actual elections. The decision to find him eligible is under appeal before the CAS, bearing court file number CAS 2025/A/11668 Thomas Brima v. SLFA. That appeal has yet to be heard.*

Mr. Brima is not a witness and will not testify. Nor will he speak on behalf of or represent any of the parties. The Appellants only ask that he is added as an observer."

80. By letter of 17 April 2026, the Appellants forwarded a copy of an email from the Respondent to the First Appellant dated 19 July 2025 (the "New Evidence"), which was requested to be admitted as evidence to the file. Moreover, and by email of the same date, the Appellants informed the CAS Court Office as follows:

"*This mail is to inform you that we have been refused Swiss entry visas as counsel for the Respondent.*

Our agent in Ivory Coast has just collected our passports from the embassy in Ivory Coast and we are at loss at the moment looking at the hearing dates of 21 and 22 April 2026."

81. Also, by letter of 17 April 2026, the Respondent "*strongly*" objected to Mr Brima being permitted to attend as an observer, submitting, *inter alia*, that it was an attempt by Mr Brima "*to gain access to private and confidential CAS proceedings and secure an unfair advantage ahead of his own hearing*". Thus, the Respondent demanded that Mr Brima "*be excluded from this hearing as it has not shown that he has any affected legal interest*".

82. On 21 and 22 April 2026, a hybrid hearing was held at the CAS headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland.

83. In addition to the Panel and Ms Delphine Deschenaux-Rochat, Counsel to the CAS, the following people attended the hearing:

For the Appellants:

Ms Aminata Bangura (First Appellant) (by video)
Mr Benjamin Gordon (Party Representative – Second Appellant) (by video)
Mr Musa Komrabai Dura Mahmood (Third Appellant) (by video)

Mr Paolo Torchetti – Counsel (by video)

Mr Mohamed Samurah Sanu – Chairman of Wilberforce Strikers FC – Witness (by video)
Mr Peter Taplima Mansaray – General Secretary of Wilberforce FC – Witness (by video)
Mr Hilton John – Journalist – Witness (by video)
Ms Nastasha Beckley – Assistant to Ms Bangura – Witness (by video)

For the SLFA:

Mr Babadi Kamara – President of the SLFA (by video)

Mr Africanus Sesay – Counsel (by video)
Mr Siman Allie Mans-Conteh – Counsel (by video)
Mr Brima Koroma – Counsel (by video)
Mr Emmanuel Wanna Conteh – Counsel (by video)
Mr Ibrahim Shaw – Counsel (by video)
Mr Alpha U. Bah – Counsel (by video)

Mr Bawoh – then Acting General Secretary – Witness (by video)
Mr Bainda – then Chairman of the Electoral Committee – Witness (by video)
Ms Stronge – then Chairman of the Electoral Appeals Committee – Witness (by video).

84. At the outset of the hearing, the Parties confirmed that they had no objections to the constitution of the Panel.

85. The Panel initially dealt with the issue of the requested presence of Mr Brima and the Appellants' request to have the New Evidence admitted to the file.

86. With regard to Mr Brima, the Panel noted that the Respondent objected to the request by the Appellants. Moreover, the Panel noted that the proceedings are not public, that Mr Brima is not a party and that apparently Mr Brima does not have any legal interest in the outcome of the case. Based, *inter alia*, on that, the Panel rejected the request to have Mr Brima present at the hearing.

87. With regard to the requested New Evidence, and as the Respondent did not object to having it included in the file, the Panel accepted the Appellants' request and allowed the New Evidence into the file.

88. The Panel heard the evidence of Ms Bangura, Mr Gordon, Mr Mahmood, Mr Sanu, Mr Mansaray, Mr John, Ms Berkley, Mr Bawoh, Mr Bainda and Ms Stronge. The witnesses were invited by the President of the Panel to tell the truth subject to the sanctions of perjury under Swiss law. The Parties and the Panel had the opportunity to examine and cross-examine the Parties and witnesses.

89. The Parties were afforded the opportunity to present their case, submit their arguments and answer the questions posed by the Panel.

90. After the Parties' final submissions, the Panel closed the hearing and reserved its final Award. Upon closure of the hearing, the Parties expressly stated that they had no objections in respect of their right to be heard and to have been treated equally in these arbitration proceedings.

91. By letter of 22 April 2026, the Parties were informed as follows:

"*On behalf of the Panel, and as discussed during the hearing, I confirm that the Respondent is invited to file, by 24 April 2026, the full and uninterrupted video footage of the elections held on 2 August 2025, together with time stamps identifying the relevant events.*"

92. By email of 24 April 2026 to the CAS Court Office, the Respondent forwarded a link to some video footage clips of the SLFA Elective Congress.

93. By letter of 7 May 2026, the Parties were informed by the CAS Court Office, *inter alia*, as follows:

"*I inform the Parties that the Panel has carefully reviewed the new videos filed by the Respondent. The Panel recalls that its expectation was – and remains – that detailed footage of the election process would be provided. Unfortunately, the material submitted to date does not present a clear picture of the presidential election process.*

In view of the above, on behalf of the Panel, the Parties are granted a final opportunity to submit, by 12 May 2026, any additional video/TV material they may have of the presidential election process itself. […]"

94. By emails of 12 May 2026, the Respondent forwarded a link to additional video footage obtained from AYV Media, based on which the Appellants were granted a short deadline to provide any comments they might have on these new footage clips.

95. On 18 May 2026, the Appellants forwarded such comments to the CAS Court Office, and finally, by letter of 19 May 2026 from the CAS Court Office, the Parties were informed that the evidentiary proceedings were now closed.

IV. THE PARTIES' SUBMISSIONS AND REQUESTS FOR RELIEF

96. The following outline of the Parties' requests for relief and positions is illustrative only and does not necessarily comprise every contention put forward by the Parties. The Panel has, however, carefully considered all the submissions and evidence filed by the Parties with the CAS, even if there is no specific reference to those submissions or evidence in the following summary.

A. The Appellants

97. In their Appeal Briefs of 13 October 2025, the Appellants on the merits requested the CAS to:

"*accept this appeal against the Decision rendered by the SLFA Elections Appeals Committee:*

a. Vacating the decision of the Electoral Appeals Committee of 18 August 2025.
b. Issuing a decision declaring the presidential elections of 2 August 2025 null and void.
c. Order the SLFA to hold new presidential elections consistent with the SLFA Constitution and SLFA Electoral Code.

In any event the Appellants request that the Panel issue an award where:

a. the Respondent pays the entire costs of the CAS proceedings; and
b. the Respondent pays the legal fees and costs in the amount of 20,000 CHF."

98. In support of their requests for relief, the Appellants submitted, *inter alia*, the following:

Power to order new elections

- The Appealed Decision is rendered pursuant to Articles 8 and 12 para 3 of the SLFA Electoral Code.

- Pursuant to Article 15 of the SLFA Electoral Code, the Electoral Committee's responsibility is, *inter alia*, "*b) to count the votes*" and "*c) to take any decision that is necessary regarding the validity or invalidity of ballot papers*".

- Moreover, it is the Electoral Committee that declares the results of the elections pursuant to Article 24 of the SLFA Electoral Code.

- Article 2 para 5 of the SLFA Electoral Appeals Committee Guidelines sets out that "*The Committee shall be competent to hear appeals from the decisions and rulings of the Electoral Committee in accordance with the Code and the SLFA Statute.*", and Article 4 para 1 of the said Guidelines reads as follows: "*An appeal may be lodged as of right from decisions, sanctions and/or rulings of the Electoral Committee in accordance with this Code.*"

- The cumulative reading of these provisions leads to the conclusion that the SLFA Electoral Appeals Committee, and therefore also the CAS, retain the jurisdiction and the power to declare the presidential elections for the SLFA null and void.

- This is also confirmed in the Appealed Decision, in which the Electoral Appeals Committee decided the merits of the dispute on the basis that the Appellants had not presented sufficient evidence to affect the elections.

- Basing its decision on the evidentiary burden of proof necessarily implies that the Electoral Appeals Committee accepted jurisdiction to decide whether the elections in question were null and void.

- In any case, the SLFA elections for the Presidency and the elections for the Executive Committee are two separate elections, and the Appellants are only requesting the vacation of the presidential election, which is consistent with how the SLFA elections are conducted under the SLFA Constitution.

- The 2025 SLFA elections were conducted in direct contravention and in violation of the SLFA regulations in six different ways, and the Appellants have proven this to the comfortable satisfaction of the Panel.

Election Committees' selection procedures

- The SLFA elections process is overseen by three bodies, the Electoral Committee, the Ethics Board and the Electoral Appeals Committee.

- In accordance with the applicable rules, the members of these bodies are to pass an integrity check, and their nomination is to be ratified by the Congress, and not by the Executive Committee.

- In the present situation, the said members never passed an integrity check, and their nominations were only confirmed by the SLFA Executive Committee.

- Pursuant to Article 25 para 9 of the SLFA Constitution "*The General Assembly ratifies the chairpersons, deputy chairpersons and members of the independent committees (i.e. electoral committees and judicial bodies)*".

- In the case of the Electoral Committee, the SLFA Electoral Code is clear on this point in Article 4, which reads, *inter alia*, as follows: "*1. The electoral committee is selected in accordance with the provision of this code, by the Congress for a of term of four years at the final ordinary Congress before the elective congress of the executive body.*"

- However, the nomination of these members of 26 April 2025 is not in accordance with these requirements.

- Moreover, Article 58 paras 1 and 2 of the SLFA Constitution reads as follows:

  "*Art 58 INDEPENDENT COMMITTEES*
  1. *The independent committees as well as their individual members shall conduct their activities and perform their duties entirely independently but always in the interests of SLFA and in accordance with its Statutes and regulations.*

  2. *The chairperson, deputy chairperson and members of the independent committees shall be elected by the Congress for a period of four years and may only be relieved of their duties by the Congress. They shall not belong to any other body of SLFA and they shall undergo an integrity check, to be conducted by the Ethics Board, prior to their election or re-election and shall fulfil the independence requirements contained in par. 5 below.*"

- Also, Article 60 para 3 of the SLFA Constitution reads as follows:

  "*All members of the judicial bodies (including the chairpersons and deputy chairpersons) shall undergo an integrity check prior to their election or re-election which shall be conducted by the Ethics Board.*"

- Finally, and with regard to the Electoral Appeals Committee, Article 3 para 2 of the SLFA Electoral Appeal Guidelines states as follows:

  "*Members of the Committee shall fulfil the independence and integrity criteria as defined in Article 58 (3) and Article 60 (3) of the SLFA Statute.*"

- Although the Electoral Committee is not technically an "independent committee", the SLFA Ethics Code applies to members of the Electoral Committee as they are "SLFA officials", and the requirement of an integrity check therefore also applies to the members of the Electoral Committee.

- The members of the Electoral Committee, the Ethics Board and the Electoral Appeals Committee were appointed by the SLFA on 26 April 2025.

- However, these members were never subject to the required integrity check and were only nominated by the Executive Committee and were never ratified by the Congress.

- The failure to perform an integrity check and the selection by the Executive Committee of these committee members compromises the integrity of these three bodies, and the entire election process has been compromised.

- It also constitutes a breach of Article 60 para 5 of the SLFA Constitution, which states that

  "*The chairpersons, deputy chairpersons and other members of the judicial bodies shall be elected by the Congress upon proposal of the Executive Committee and shall not be members of any other body of SLFA.*"

- This violates mandatory statutory provisions and compromises the independence of the SLFA's judicial bodies, rendering the Congress unlawful.

- As a result, several members of the Electoral Committee and Ethics Committee ought not to have been on these committees, as they are active government employees, in violation of Article 3 para 4 of the SLFA Electoral Code.

Improper convening of elections

- The SLFA Constitution requires that an elective congress be presided over by either the SLFA President or the First Vice-President.

- The Congress of 2 August 2025 was neither convened nor presided over by the SLFA President or the First Vice-President, but was presided over by the Second Vice-President, Mr Tarawally.

- In the absence of the President and the First Vice-President, the correct procedure would have been for the entire Executive Committee to have overseen and presided over the SLFA Elections.

- Pursuant to Article 22 c) of the SLFA Constitution, the Congress has, *inter alia*, the authority for "*Electing the President and the Vice Presidents and the members of the Executive Committee;*"

- Moreover, Article 20 para 3 of the SLFA Constitution requires that "*The President shall conduct the Congress business in compliance with the standing orders of the Congress.*"

- Thus, the President of the SLFA must convene and preside over an Elective Congress for the elections to be correctly and legitimately held, which is confirmed by the wording of Article 37 para 3 of the SLFA Constitution, which reads as follows:

"*The President shall preside over the Congress, the Executive Committee, the Emergency Committee meetings, and those committees of which he has been appointed chairman.*"

- However, as Mr Brima had received a one-year ban from football-related activities, the SLFA did not have someone fulfilling the role of President as of 19 July 2025 to convene and preside over the Elective Congress.

- In such a case, Article 37 para 5 of the SLFA Constitution would apply:

  "*In the event of the death of the President or in the event the President is not able to attend the Executive Committee Meetings for a period of Six (6) months, the First Vice-President deputizes and an Extraordinary Congress shall be convened by the First Vice-President within ninety (90) days and a new President shall be elected.*"

- As such, the correct elective procedure would have been for the First Vice-President to convene and preside over an Extraordinary Congress within 90 days.

- However, this never happened, and the Congress on 2 August 2025 was convened as an "Ordinary Congress" and not an "Extraordinary Congress".

- Neither the President nor the First Vice-President convened or presided over the Congress.

- In such a case, the members of the Executive Committee and not only one person, should have presided over the Elective Congress.

- Instead, an Executive Committee Member and the Second Vice-President, Mr Tarawally, took charge and rushed into elections without a proper roll call or following the approved agenda.

- Therefore, the Congress was convened in breach of the SLFA Constitution.

- The SLFA Constitution provides no legal basis for the Second Vice-President to assume presidential functions or to convene a Congress under any circumstances.

- Moreover, several mandatory items on the agenda pursuant to Article 27 para 2 a) – c) were never observed or acted upon during the Congress.

- The result is that the agenda was not observed, as it was never changed to reflect who was presiding over the elections, and resulted in a patent defect in the electoral process.

- The SLFA Constitution requires that in such a case, an Extraordinary Congress be held and that the Executive Committee preside over the elections. This is also the case, even if a new electoral road map would have been necessary and the process would have had to start over.

- Based on these circumstances, the elections ought to be overturned.

Violation of candidate deadlines set by the SLFA

- The SLFA regulations set time periods and deadlines for the receipt of candidates' nominations, the review of candidates' eligibility and a final deadline for the final list of candidates.

- The SLFA did not make decisions on candidates' eligibility within sufficient time before the elections as required by the SLFA Constitution and SLFA Electoral Code.

- On 5 June 2025, the Electoral Roadmap was issued.

- The closure of nominations occurred in accordance with the regulations where all presidential candidates submitted their nominations in time, and the SLFA Electoral Committee issued its initial ruling with respect to the basic eligibility of presidential candidates on 19 June 2025.

- On 19 July 2025 and following the declaration of two of the presidential candidates as ineligible, the Chairman of the SLFA Ethics Committee communicated the list of candidates for the purposes of convocation on the same day.

- However, pursuant to the Electoral Roadmap, the "Communication of qualified candidates" was to be issued by the 8 July 2025 in order to offer candidates time to appeal decisions to either the Electoral Appeals Committee or the Court of Arbitration for Sport, where applicable.

- The Appellants were not given sufficient time to exercise their appeal rights as the final list of presidential candidates was only issued on 19 July 2025, i.e. 13 days before the elections.

- This is in direct contravention of Article 25 para 8 of the SLFA Constitution, which reads as follows:

  "*Candidatures for any of the positions of the Executive Committee and from the Independent Committees shall be sent to the general secretariat at least thirty (30) days before the relevant elective Congress. The official list of candidates must be passed to the Members of SLFA at least 15 days before the Congress at which the Executive Committee shall be elected or at which the Independent Committees (i.e. electoral committees and judicial bodies) shall be ratified. The provisions of this paragraph shall also apply when elections take place during an Extraordinary Congress.*"

- Neither the 30-day rule applying to the General Secretariat nor the 15-day rule applying to the members of the SLFA was respected.

- A decision of the Electoral Committee to find a candidate ineligible can be appealed to the Electoral Appeals Committee.

- However, this is not the case here, as the Ethics Board intervened and found Ms Bangura and Mr Brima ineligible to stand in the presidential elections, which decisions were appealed to the CAS.

- Therefore, a final list cannot be issued in accordance with Article 25 para 8 of the SLFA Constitution on such a tight timeline.

- The Electoral Road Map does not account for the possibility that a candidate can be declared ineligible by the Ethics Board, which is what happened in this case.

- The SLFA did not adhere to dates and time deadlines as it declared itself in the Electoral Roadmap, or those set out in the SLFA Constitution.

- The violation and abridgement of the deadlines in the Electoral Roadmap severely and directly interfered with the democratic rights of presidential candidates.

- Specifically, this significantly impeded Ms Bangura's democratic rights to campaign and stand in the elections in a timely manner.

- On this basis, the presidential elections ought to be overturned.

Tampering of delegates list

- The list of delegates who were to rightfully vote in the elections was improperly manipulated.

- Six individuals who were supposed to represent their respective SLFA member organisations and vote on the members' behalf were excluded incorrectly.

- Article 21 paras 2 and 3 of the SLFA Constitution reads as follows:

  "*2. Delegates must belong to the Member that they represent and be appointed or elected by the appropriate body of the member. They must also be able to produce evidence of this upon request. Delegates for the Executive Committee for the premier league clubs shall be either the chairman or its representative.*
  3. Each member has the right to vote in Congress. Only the delegates present are entitled to vote. Each delegate has one voting right. Voting by proxy or by letter is not permitted."

- By email of 1 August 2025 from Mr Bawoh, the SLFA Acting General Secretary, to Mr Harraz, FIFA delegate, Mr Bawoh, stated, *inter alia*, as follows:

  "*1. First and foremost, the Electoral Committee requested members to physically submit their delegate list with a cut off period slated for Saturday 26th July 2025. A waybook was made available for this exercise, and all members who submitted their lists registered on the way book. Despite my role in consultative capacity, to the committee, the electoral committee completely ignored my advice to them based on the statute but whoever decided to use the number game instead of the statute.*

2. *The Electoral Committee in their communication requesting the list of delegates stated that the submission must be done in person between the periods spanning from 25th July, 2025 - 26th July, 2025.*

3. *I wish to register that the delegate list published by the Electoral Committee has imposed 6 delegate status on some members as against the bonafide delegates as was received by the Electoral Committee and evidently recorded by the waybook supported for the exercise. […]*

Based on statutes of SLFA and the Statutes of the members in question and review of the petitions by members therein in, the undermentioned persons should be on the delegate list instead of the six published by the Electoral Committee.

1. *Kono Diamond Stars ; Tamba Kaigbanja*
2. *Koinadugu District: Abdul Karim Kamara*
3. *Kambia District: Musa K.D. Mahmood*
4. *Western Urban District: Musa Pokawa*
5. *Bombali District: Adam Lilson Koroma*
6. *Northeast Region; Abass Jalloh*

I have also forwarded the protests emails to the Electoral Committee as received."

- The new voters' delegates list was issued on 1 August 2025, and all protest letters were sent immediately thereafter.

- However, the SLFA ignored all rightful nominations and subsequent protests, which is a violation of, *inter alia*, Article 5 para 3 of the SLFA Electoral Code, which states that

  "*the General Secretary of the SLFA serves as the secretary to the electoral committee. He takes part in the activity of the electoral committee in a consultative capacity, is responsible for the related logistical matters and takes care of administrative matters*".

- Pursuant to Article 8 of the Electoral Code, and as the voter list was changed from the last week of 26 July to 1 August, it is necessary for the Electoral Committee to make a decision.

- These "decisions" were made on 1 August 2025 via the distribution of the new voters' delegates list.

- Therefore, that a voter list was used to prevent legitimate voters from casting their ballot is contrary to the principles and regulations of the SLFA Constitution and the SLFA Electoral Code.

- The unilateral replacement of voter delegates occurred in violation of Articles 21 paras 1 to 3 of the SLFA Constitution and Article 6 para 1 (i) and (j) of the SLFA Electoral Code and without statutory authority and without legal basis.

Intimidation and police brutality

- As certain delegates objected to the method in which the Congress was convened, security forces moved in to intimidate and attack the delegates.

- As a result, Mr Gordon was attacked, beaten and dragged from the hall to the police van, where he was arrested and subsequently denied his right to vote.

- This was an egregious violation of his civil rights and the use of state force to suppress electoral participation.

- Moreover, delegates were prevented from voting using a doctored delegates list and faced heavy police presence, creating an environment of fear and intimidation.

- The use of police brutality is a violation of, *inter alia*, Articles 2 and 4 of the SLFA Constitution and Article 2 of the SLFA Electoral Code.

- It was the SLFA Secretariat that was responsible for the police presence and, subsequently, responsible for the incidents of police violence.

- Evidence shows that it was the Second Vice-President, Mr Tarawally, the Acting General Secretary of the SLFA, Mr Bawoh, and the Chairman of the Southern Region, Mr Joseph Mogba, that were responsible for the police violence as they called for police intervention.

- In addition, the SLFA Secretariat and the SLFA Electoral Committee are responsible for the running of elections, based on which it must be presumed that these bodies are responsible for these actions.

- It must also be noted that FIFA recognises that football actors around the world must respect human rights and that member associations conduct their affairs in accordance with representative democracy.

- However, the SLFA and those responsible for the running of the elections have transgressed these fundamental principles of human rights and democracy, and the deployment of police and security forces is a violation of each and every one of these principles.

- Based on these circumstances, the elections must be nullified.

Secrecy of elections – Marked ballots

- It is a simple principle of football democracy that elections for executive positions are held by secret ballot to protect the integrity of elections.

- The presidential elections ought to be overturned on this basis alone given the fact that all ballots were marked and, consequently, should have been discarded and a new election ought to be held.

- Article 25 para 1 of the SLFA Constitution reads as follows:

  "*Elections shall be conducted by secret ballot.*"

- This principle is confirmed where Article 21 para 1 (d) of the SLFA Electoral Code deems identifiable ballots to be ineligible when they "*bear identifying marks*".

- Moreover, Article 25 para 7 of the SLFA Constitution requires that manipulated votes are to be disregarded.

- At the Congress, the ballot papers used during the election were serialised, enabling identification of individual votes, and the voting went ahead anyway under threats of violence.

- One by one, the Electoral Committee called a voter delegate out by name, publicly in front of the entire Congress, to vote. The names were called in order according to a list that the Electoral Committee kept.

- When called out loud, the person went up to the front of the hall to be registered by the SLFA Electoral Committee.

- The voter was then required to sign in on that list to verify their identity.

- That list had voting delegates' names with a number beside it.

- After signing, the voting delegate was given a ballot, and all ballots had a serialised number on it. The serialised number was printed on the ballot and could not be removed.

- Delegates entered the voting booth, made their selections and placed the ballot in the ballot box, and the delegates were then required to sign a second list, confirming that they voted.

- Article 19 of the SLFA Electoral Code generally outlines the process of delegates being called and the requirement to sign election rolls. However, it is submitted that the ballots were tracked by virtue of the public nature of being called to vote, the lists to be signed, both before and after, and the number on the ballot.

- The elections ought to be declared null and void on this basis alone.

- It is the cumulative nature of the publicly calling voters out loud in front of the Congress, subject to a numerical list, and the marked ballots that have compromised secrecy.

- Specifically, the ballot box was being monitored by members of the Electoral Committee.

- This is in direct conflict with the principle of the secrecy of the ballot – a cornerstone of free and fair elections.

- The fear of retribution may have inhibited delegates from voting according to their conscience.

B. SLFA

99. In its Answers of 7 January 2026, SLFA requested the Panel to "*dismiss the Appeal in its entirety*" and furthermore requested that:

"*The Panel upholds the Elections Appeals Committee's Decision in the following:*

The request to declare the Congress and elections null and void is dismissed, as the appellants have not provided sufficient evidence to prove that the alleged violations materially affected the election's integrity or outcome.

The Appellants shall be ordered to bear the costs of the arbitration and they shall be ordered to contribute to the legal fees incurred by the Respondent."

100. In support of its requests for relief, SLFA submitted, *inter alia*, the following:

- Initially, it must be stressed that the burden of proof regarding the Appellants' allegations is on the Appellants and that the Appellants have failed to meet the required burden of proof to substantiate their allegations, both before the Elections Appeals Committee and before the CAS.

- Moreover, it must be stressed that the Statutes and accompanying regulations of the SLFA enable all its members to challenge decisions and actions taken by the SLFA or any of its independent committees.

- The Appellants by their conduct acquiesced to the actions and decisions of the SLFA, and they cannot now challenge processes they knowingly participated in without objection.

- The SLFA acknowledges that in every electioneering process there are bound to be teething problems, and it has taken note of the various recommendations by the Electoral Appeals Committee in the Appealed Decision.

- However, those issues set out by the Appellants are not sufficient grounds for the annulment of the entire elections, especially as they have failed to demonstrate how these issues impacted on the outcome of the elections.

- The process at the elections was free and fair, and the final results were decisively in favour of one candidate over the other.

Election Committees' selection procedures

- It is not disputed that Article 60 para 3 of the SLFA Constitution is an important concern and the SLFA appreciates its significance.

- This provision was stipulated on the assumption that there would always be an existing Ethics Board in place to oversee the integrity check of the nominees to the judicial bodies.

- However, in the specific circumstances of the present dispute, there is a valid reason as to why no prior integrity check was done on the candidates.

- Whilst it is unusual and certainly not a position the SLFA wanted to be in, there is a legal basis in Article 60 para 4 and Article 58 para 2 of the SLFA Constitution for the removal of members of the Ethics Board.

- In accordance with Article 58 para 2, it was the Congress of 5 July 2023 that decided to dissolve the Ethics Board in order to have new members appointed at the next following Congress.

- Moreover, it must be noted that there was no violation of Article 60 para 5, which states as follows:

  The chairpersons, deputy chairpersons and other members of the judicial bodies shall be elected by the Congress upon proposal of the Executive Committee and shall not be members of any other body of SLFA."

  since the members were elected at the 26 April 2025 Ordinary Congress after due consideration by the Executive Committee.

- It is not disputed that the usual process is that nominees sent to the Executive Committee are to be subjected to integrity checks by an Ethics Board.

- However, the Panel should note that this was a case of force majeure, which is why the regular process of integrity checks could not be conducted by an existing Ethics Board.

- Moreover, no objections were received in this regard at the time.

- The Appellants also raise questions about the selection process of the Electoral Committee pursuant to Article 4 of the Electoral Code.

- There are two ambits in the above provision. The first requires the Electoral Committee to be elected for a term of four years. The second is that their election should be at the final Ordinary Congress before the Elective Congress of the Executive Committee of the Respondent.

- The final Ordinary Congress before the Elective Congress of the Executive Committee was held on 26 April 2025, which is when the current members of the Electoral Committee were selected. Moreover, the members were selected for a term of four years due to expire in 2029, satisfying both ambits of Article 4 of the Electoral Code.

Improper convening of elections

- It is not correct that the Congress was improperly convened without the President or the First Vice-President in attendance.

- Moreover, it is not correct that the Congress convened by the Second Vice-President constitutes a violation of Article 37 paras 3 and 5 of the SLFA Constitution.

- First of all, there is a stark distinction between Executive Committee meetings and Congresses; and Mr Brima in this situation was not absent from an Executive Committee meeting but from an Ordinary Congress, and the reference of an absent President in Article 37 para 5 only deals with Executive Committee meetings and not Congresses.

- Secondly, it was only a 14-day period from when Mr Brima was banned to when the elections were held, and as a result the absence for a period of six months that would trigger Article 37 para 5 of the SLFA Constitution is inapplicable in the circumstances.

- With regard to the alleged violation of Article 37 para 3 of the SLFA Constitution, first of all it must be stressed that the President is one member of an 11-member Executive Committee as provided for under Article 32 para 1 of the SLFA Constitution:

  The Executive Committee consists of eleven (11) members;

  a. One President
  b. One First Vice-President
  c. One Second Vice-president
  d. The Chairman of each of the four [sic] (5) regional associations
  e. Three congress elected members

- Secondly, and pursuant to Article 34 (b) of the SLFA Constitution, one of the powers of the Executive Committee is to "*prepare and convene the Ordinary and Extraordinary Congress of SLFA*".

- Whilst the President of the SLFA, by virtue of his status, should be the one to preside, due to legal reasons he was not able to.

- In such a situation, the entire Congress which had been prepared and convened by the 11 members of the Executive Committee could not have been annulled just because one of its members was absent.

- In any case, this was a case of force majeure, and pursuant to Article 82 of the SLFA Constitution "*Any matter not provided for under these statutes or cases of majeure shall be settled by the Executive Committee, whose decisions shall be final.*"

- Moreover, and as set out in the Appealed Decision: "*The Committee observes that while the SLFA Constitution does not expressly address temporary delegation of the chair in circumstances short of death or prolonged incapacity, the Standing Orders provide a practical mechanism for ensuring continuity*"

- Having the Second Vice-President presiding over the Congress was the correct decision, in the absence of the President and the First Vice-President.

- The Appealed Decision deals with this situation and states:

  "*A hypothetical concern that crossed our minds is - what if the First Vice President were to absent himself deliberately? Would this require Congress to be postponed indefinitely? Clearly, such an interpretation would frustrate the functioning of the Association and cannot have been the intention of the framers of the Constitution. The Standing Orders are designed to avoid precisely such a paralysis by providing a default mechanism to ensure Congress proceeds*."

- The Electoral Appeals Committee based on the evidence and facts narrated above was comfortably satisfied that the Congress was properly convened in the absence of the President and First Vice-President, and the CAS should come to the same conclusion.

<u>Alleged violation of candidate deadlines set by the SLFA</u>

- With reference to the Appellants' submission that neither the 30-day rule applying to the General Secretariat nor the 15-day rule applying to the members of the SLFA was respected, the SLFA submits that all deadlines were respected.

- The first part of Article 25 para 8 of the SLFA Constitution states that:

  "*Candidatures for any of the positions of the Executive Committee and from the Independent Committees shall be sent to the general secretariat at least thirty (30) days before the relevant elective Congress.*"

- First of all, this rule concerns the candidates' obligations to forward their relevant documentation to the General Secretariat of the SLFA at least 30 days before the elections.

- The SLFA received all the candidates' application bundle for the Executive Committee by 15 June 2025, which was in compliance with the 30-day rule for the Elective Congress held on 2 August 2025.

- As for candidates for the Independent Committees, they all submitted their Integrity Check Forms together with their supporting documents during February 2025 for the Congress that was held in April 2025, making them also compliant with the 30-day rule.

- The second part of Article 25 para 8 of the SLFA Constitution states that

  "*The official list of candidates must be passed to the Members of SLFA at least 15 days before the Congress at which the Executive Committee shall be elected or at which the Independent Committees (i.e. electoral committees and judicial bodies) shall be ratified."*

  This deadline was complied with by the Final List of Candidates for the SLFA 2025 Elections' statement issued by the Electoral Committee on 19 July 2025, which gives exactly 15 days between 19 July and 2 August 2025.

- On the issue of sending the final voter list late, it must be stressed that the Electoral Code does not specify a timeline for voter list distribution.

- The Electoral Committee received objections and counter nominations for delegates up until the end of July, which is why it was forced to send the final list on the eve of the election day only.

Alleged tampering of delegates list

- It is not correct that the legitimate delegates were tampered with and replaced without due process by the Electoral Committee.

- Before the Congress, a number of conflicts arose amongst clubs and associations on whether their chairman should represent them as a delegate.

- Faced with such confusion, the Electoral Committee had to decide in most cases whether to recognise the existing chairman or replace him with the counter nominations sent by other persons.

- The Electoral Committee, using its powers afforded to it under the Electoral Code, assumed full responsibility for the compilation of the delegates list.

- Article 6 of the Electoral Code outlines the duties and gives the Electoral Committee the powers to take necessary actions, which was utilised to resolve the various disputes among delegates.

- The Minutes of Electoral Committee 30 July 2025 deal case-by-case with such disputes.

- The law and procedure relied upon by the Electoral Committee were clearly narrated in the Appealed Decision as follows:

"*The Electoral Committee relied on Article 6 (i & j) of the SLFA Electoral Code to address issues of ineligibility, with the process involving the General Secretary and the Committee taking full responsibility for the decisions made.*"

- This was endorsed by the FIFA representatives, who ruled that the Electoral Committee had employed the correct method in determining who were the proper delegates to represent the different stakeholders at the Elective Congress.

- The email sent by the Acting General Secretary regarding the issue of delegates relied on by the Appellants is not decisive, as the Acting General Secretary and every other official working for the SLFA are aware that it is only the Electoral Committee that is statutorily empowered to compile the list of delegates.

- In any case, it must be stressed that even the decisions regarding the delegates did not have any material influence on the final outcome of the elections.

Alleged intimidation and police brutality

- With regard to the alleged intimidation and police brutality, it is noted that after having obtained permission to speak pursuant to Article 6 of the Standing Orders of Congress, Mr Gordon and others raised a Point of Order citing constitutional violations and a procedural motion to halt the Congress in the absence of the President and First Vice-President.

- Article 8 of the Standing Orders of Congress states as follows:

  "*If a procedural motion is made, discussion on the main question shall be suspended until a vote has been taken on the motion.*

  If a motion is made to close the discussion, it shall immediately be put to the vote without debate. If the motion is approved, permission to speak shall only be granted to those Members who have asked to speak before the vote was taken.

  The chair shall close the discussion unless the Congress decide otherwise by a simple majority of those voting."

- The conclusion was to proceed with the Congress upon reliance on Article 2 of the Standing Orders of Congress, which states that "*The President shall chair the Congress. If the President is unable to attend, the longest serving vice-president available shall deputise. If none of the vice presidents is present, the Congress shall elect a member of the Executive Committee as chairman*."

- This proposal was endorsed by a democratic vote (38 out of 57) of the majority present at the Congress.

- Mr Gordon refused to accept the resolution of the majority and continued to speak without permission in violation of the Standing Orders of Congress and, thus, had to be escorted outside of the hall by the Sierra Leone Police.

- The SLFA is not in a position to confirm or deny the actions of the Sierra Leone Police, who are an independent state institution requested to provide security services.

- Notwithstanding this, the SLFA accepts that it owed a duty of care to all delegates as advised by the Electoral Appeals Committee in the Appealed Decision.

Secrecy of elections – Marked ballots

- It is not disputed that the ballots used for the presidential election at the Congress were marked with serial numbers.

- However, this was done in order to prevent duplication and/or fraud.

- As found in the Appealed Decision, there was no use of intimidation towards any of the delegates, nor was there any breach of secrecy.

- The numbered ballots were all jumbled together in order to ensure secrecy and to prevent ballots from being traced to voters.

- Additionally, the fact that names were called out and voters asked to sign two lists was to ensure that the SLFA could account for the exact number of delegates entitled to vote, especially with the various disputes prior to the election between members over who was the correct delegate.

- The entire voting process progressed in accordance with guidelines set out by the Electoral Committee and in accordance with Article 6 of the Electoral Code.

- In any case, the Appellants have not provided any evidence in support of votes being traceable or delegates being intimidated.

V. CAS JURISDICTION

101. In accordance with Article 186 para 1 of the Swiss Private International Law Act, the CAS has the power to decide upon its own jurisdiction.

102. Article R47 para 1 of the CAS Code states as follows:

"*An appeal against the decision of a federation, association or sports-related body may be filed with CAS if the statutes or regulations of the said body so provide or if the parties have concluded a specific arbitration agreement and if the Appellant has exhausted the legal remedies available to it prior to the appeal, in accordance with the statutes or regulations of that body.*"

103. With respect to the Appealed Decision, the Appellants submits that the jurisdiction of the CAS derives from Article 9 of the SLFA Electoral Appeals Guidelines, which reads as follows:

"*Decisions passed by the Committee may be appealed against before CAS, subject to the provisions of the Code, Article 65 and 67 of the SLFA Statutes and Article 57 and 58 of FIFA Statutes.*

104. The jurisdiction of the CAS was confirmed by the SLFA in its Answer and furthermore confirmed by all the Parties signing the Order of Procedure.

105. It follows that the CAS has jurisdiction to decide on the appeals brought against the Appealed Decision.

VI. ADMISSIBILITY OF THE APPEALS

106. Article R49 of the CAS Code provides in its relevant parts as follows:

"*In the absence of a time limit set in the statutes or regulations of the federation, association or sports-related body concerned, or in a previous agreement, the time limit for appeal shall be twenty-one days from the receipt of the decision appealed against.*"

107. The Appellants submit that neither the SLFA Constitution, the SLFA Ethics Code, the SLA Electoral Code nor the SLFA Election Appeals Guidelines 2021 provide any rules regarding the time limit for appeal, which is not disputed by the SLFA.

108. The Appealed Decision was issued on 18 August 2025, and the Appellants' Statement of Appeal was lodged on 8 September 2025, i.e. within the statutory time limit of 21 days set forth in Article R49 of the CAS Code, which is not disputed.

109. What is more, the Statement of Appeal complied with all the requirements of Article R48 of the CAS Code.

110. SLFA has not disputed the admissibility of the Appeals.

111. It follows that the appeals of the Appealed Decision are admissible.

VII. APPLICABLE LAW

112. With respect to the governing law, Article R58 of the CAS Code states as follows:

"*The Panel shall decide the dispute according to the applicable regulations and, subsidiarily, to the rules of law chosen by the parties or, in the absence of such a choice, according to the law of the country in which the federation, association or sports-related body which has issued the challenged decision is domiciled or according to the rules of law the Panel deems appropriate. In the latter case, the Panel shall give reasons for its decision.*"

113. The Appellants, on the one hand, submit that since the present dispute concerns the validity of SLFA Presidential Elections and members of the SLFA Executive Committee, and pursuant to Article 7 of the SLFA Constitution, the SLFA Electoral

Appeals Guidelines, the SLFA Electoral Code and the SLFA Constitution are applicable.

114. The Respondent, on the other hand, submits that pursuant to Article 66 para 1 of the SLFA Statutes, the regulations of FIFA, CAF and SLFA are applicable on the merits, with Swiss Law being applicable as last resort, if so needed.

115. Based on the foregoing, and in accordance with the Parties' respective submissions, the Panel is satisfied to accept the application of the various regulations of the SLFA, in particular the SLFA Electoral Appeals Guidelines, the SLFA Electoral Code, the SLFA Standing Order of the Congress 2012 and the SLFA Constitution are applicable to the merits of the case.

VIII. MERITS

1. Initial considerations

116. At the outset, the Panel notes that the factual circumstances pertaining to this matter are to a certain extent undisputed. Thus, the following elements relevant to the Panel's reasoning are undisputed, unless indicated otherwise:

- In July 2023, the SLFA Ethics Board was dissolved by the SLFA Ordinary Congress with plans to elect new members within three months at an Extraordinary Congress. The legality of such a decision does not appear to be disputed.

- However, the said Congress was eventually postponed several times, but eventually, on 26 April 2025, the new members of, *inter alia*, the Electoral Committee, the Electoral Appeals Committee and the Ethics Board were elected.

- On 5 June 2025, and while Mr Brima was still acting as President of the SLFA, the SLFA Electoral Committee issued the Electoral Roadmap, according to which the SLFA Presidential Election was scheduled to take place on 2 August 2025.

- By the Ethics Board Decision of 18 July 2025, Mr Brima and Ms Bangura were "*barred from contesting as president in the forthcoming SLFA Elective Congress*" fined and "*banned from taking part in any football-related activity for a period of one (1) year*".

- Both Mr Brima and Ms Bangura brought appeals before the CAS in order to have the Ethics Board Decision overturned, and by an Order on Provisional Measures of 31 July 2025, the CAS declared Ms Bangura "*eligible to stand in the presidential election of the Sierra Leone Football Association, to be held on 2 August 2025*". No such order was issued with regard to Mr Brima.

- Thus, Ms Bangura stood in the presidential election as a presidential candidate.

- As a consequence of the Ethics Board Decision, Mr Brima did not attend the SLFA Elective Congress on 2 August 2025.

- Moreover, the First Vice-President also failed to attend the SLFA Elective Congress, which apparently only became evident on the same day.

- However, it was eventually decided to proceed with the SLFA Elective Congress with the Second Vice-President, Mr Tarawally, presiding over it. Also, two FIFA officials attended the SLFA Elective Congress as observers.

- Following this decision, a disturbance occurred, and the police and security forces were subsequently called, apparently after the Congress had been suspended and delayed for more than three hours, and removed Mr Gordon from the location where the Congress was held. Mr Gordon was later arrested and, consequently, did not participate in the presidential election.

- Eventually, the SLFA Presidential Election was held, and Mr Kamara won the election with 43 votes, whereas Ms Bangura received 11 votes. The third presidential candidate, Mr Bah, withdrew from the presidential elections before the voting.

- It is not disputed that one by one the voting delegates were called out publicly by their names by the Electoral Committee and asked to sign a list, which had all the voting delegates' names listed with a specific number opposite each name. Moreover, after having cast their vote, each voting delegate was asked to sign another list, confirming that they had cast their vote.

- Furthermore, it is not disputed that the ballot papers used for the presidential election were serial numbered. However, according to the SLFA, the ballots, except for the first three ballots, were mixed up before being allocated to delegates in order to ensure that the delegates were not given ballots based on their respective numbers on the signed voter list.

- Following the SLFA Elective Congress, the Appellants lodged appeals before the SLFA Electoral Appeals Committee asserting that the outcome of the SLFA Elective Congress was to be declared invalid due to, *inter alia*, alleged significant statutory violations and procedural irregularities.

- The Electoral Appeals Committee eventually found, *inter alia*, that even if some irregularities occurred in connection with and during the SLFA Elective Congress, it was not proven that such irregularities materially altered the outcome of the elections, based on which the appeals were dismissed.

117. While the Appellants in these proceedings maintain their request that the presidential election of 2 August 2025 be declared null and void due to the alleged direct contravention and violation of the SLFA rules and regulations, the Respondent, even if admitting that the SLFA Elective Congress was not conducted without problems, requests that the Appellants' request be dismissed.

118. The Panel notes in this regard that, in contrast to the procedures before the SLFA Electoral Appeals Committee, the present proceedings now only concern the legality

and validity of the presidential election which took place during the SLFA Elective Congress and not the SLFA Elective Congress as a whole.

119. The Panel further notes that the Appellants request the CAS to declare the said presidential election null and void and to order the SLFA to hold a new presidential election in accordance with the SLFA Constitution and the SLFA Electoral Code.

120. Pursuant to Article 15 of the SLFA Electoral Code, which pursuant to Article 1 of the same Code is applicable to presidential elections, the Electoral Committee's responsibility is, *inter alia*, "*b) to count the votes, c) to take any decision that is necessary regarding the validity or invalidity of ballot papers, d) in general, to pass a definitive decision on any matters relating to the voting procedure during the elective congress*" and "*f) to declare the official results*".

121. Moreover, it is not disputed that the SLFA Electoral Appeals Committee was competent to render the Appealed Decision, which concerned a final decision rendered by the Electoral Committee.

122. Thus, and even if Article 15 of the SLFA Electoral Code does not specifically set out the power to declare a presidential election null and void, the Panel finds that based on the competence assigned to the Electoral Committee pursuant to Article 15 of the SLFA Electoral Code, the SLFA Electoral Appeals Committee, and thus also the CAS in case of an appeal as the present one, is competent to set aside any decision covered by the said article, which includes the competence to set aside any decision on matters relating to, inter alia, the voting procedure and any decision regarding the declaration of the final election result.

123. Thus, the Panel agrees with the Appellants that the CAS has the power to declare the presidential election of the SLFA null and void. The Panel notes in this regard that Ms Stronge, Chairman of the Electoral Appeals Committee, confirmed during the hearing that this was also her understanding, which also supports the Panel's understanding.

124. As already mentioned, the Panel further notes that the Appellants also request the CAS to order the SLFA to hold a new election in accordance with the SLFA Constitution and the SLFA Electoral Code, which power, however, the Panel finds does not automatically derive from the power to annul an election pursuant to Article 15 of the SLFA Electoral Code. The Panel finds that it only needs to deal with this question at a later stage in the event that the Appellants' request to have the presidential election of the SLFA declared null and void is upheld.

2. Standard of proof and burden of proof

125. Before identifying and discussing the main issues to be addressed by the Panel, the latter finds it necessary to mention and establish the relevant aspects related to the standard and burden of proof.

126. As regards the applicable standard of proof, and based on the Parties' submissions, the Panel agrees that the standard of 'comfortable satisfaction' is applicable to the case at hand. The Panel notes in this regard that the standard of 'comfortable satisfaction' "*falls in between 'beyond a reasonable doubt' and 'balance of probabilities' on the standard of proof spectrum*" (CAS Bulletin 2023/01, p. 44, discussing CAS 2020/A/7180). As a result, comfortable satisfaction must be the applicable standard in this matter.

127. With regard to the burden of proof, the Panel makes reference to CAS jurisprudence providing that: "*in CAS arbitration, any party wishing to prevail on a disputed issue must discharge its burden of proof, i.e. it must meet the onus to substantiate its allegations and to affirmatively prove the facts on which it relies with respect to that issue. In other words, the party which asserts facts to support its rights has the burden of establishing them (..). The Code sets forth an adversarial system of arbitral justice, rather than an inquisitorial one. Hence, if a party wishes to establish some fact and persuade the deciding body, it must actively substantiate its allegations with convincing evidence*" (e.g. CAS 2003/A/506, para 54; CAS 2009/A/1810&1811, para 46; and CAS 2009/A/1975, paras. 71 ff).

128. The Panel finds that it is up to the Appellants to discharge the burden of proving, to the comfortable satisfaction of the Panel, that the alleged irregularities and violations of the SLFA rules and regulations in fact occurred as submitted.

129. However, the Panel also notes that not all immaterial irregularities or minor violations of the SLFA rules and regulations are *per se* sufficient for the Panel to declare the presidential election null and void.

130. In circumstances where the Appellants are requesting, *inter alia*, that the SLFA President Election be declared null and void, and in light of the Parties' submissions in that regard, the Panel finds that in order for the Appellants to prevail, the Appellants not only need to discharge their burden of proof regarding the alleged irregularities and/or violations. The Appellants also need to prove and persuade the Panel to its comfortable satisfaction that the irregularities and/or violations, either individually or cumulatively, can be considered to have materially affected the integrity and/or outcome of the SLFA President Election.

131. In this regard, and albeit related to a different legal regime, the Panel notes with interest the findings of the SFT, as set out in CAS 2019/A/6577, para 88 "*[…] that the Swiss Federal Tribunal (SFT) suggests that, in assessing a defect in the decision-making process of a general assembly, such as an imprecise, unclear or misleading agenda, whether or not the ensuing resolution should be set aside depends on the assessment of the concept of defect and the gravity of the violation. It is therefore essential to determine whether or not the alleged defect could have had an influence on the decision (ATF 132 III 503; ATF 114 II 193; 5A_760/2011 at 3.2.3.2).*"

132. Moreover, and in line with this, the panel in CAS 2022/A/9167, para 128, found that "*even if there had been flaws in the election process, which besides the miscalculation of the votes in the election for the Secretary General, does not appear to have been the case, this does not render the elections invalid as such. In order for the Panel to do so,*

substantial legal provisions would have to be violated and the Appellants have not established this to have been the case. The mere fact that the elections may, at times, have been somewhat chaotic is insufficient in this respect. Chaos as such is not a violation of the applicable rules."

3. The main issues to be addressed by the Panel

133. Based on the above, the Panel finds that the main issue to be addressed by the Panel is whether the SLFA President Election of 2 August 2025 must be declared null and void due to the alleged contravention and violation of the SLFA rules and regulations.

134. In this regard, the Panel will deal with the following alleged irregularities and violations of the SLFA rules and regulations in order to decide whether such irregularities and/or violations actually can be established and, if so, whether they, individually or cumulatively, can be considered to have materially affected the integrity and/or outcome of the SLFA President Election:

A) Election Committees' selection procedures
B) Alleged violation of candidate deadlines set by SLFA
C) Alleged tampering of delegates list
D) Allegedly improper convening of elections
E) Alleged intimidation and police brutality
F) Secrecy of the presidential election – marked ballots

4. Relevant rules and regulations

135. Before addressing the above-mentioned issues, the Panel here sets out the principal rules and regulations that it finds particularly relevant to the present case:

SLFA CONSTITUTION 2019

"*[…]*
Art. 20 DEFINITION AND COMPOSITION OF CONGRESS
1. *The Congress is the meeting at which all of the members of SLFA regularly convene. It represents the supreme and legislative authority of SLFA. Only a Congress that is regularly convened with the standing orders of the Congress has the authority to make decision.*
2. *A Congress may be an ordinary or extraordinary Congress.*
3. *The President shall conduct the Congress business in compliance with standing orders of the Congress. […]*

Art. 21 DELEGATES AND VOTES
[…]
2. *Delegates must belong to the Member that they represent and be appointed or elected by the appropriate body of the member. They must also be able to produce evidence of this upon request. Delegates for the Executive Committee for the premier league clubs shall be either the chairman or its representative.*

3. Each member has the right to vote in Congress. Only the delegates present are entitled to vote. Each delegate has one voting right. Voting by proxy or by letter is not permitted.

[…]

Art. 22 AREAS OF AUTHORITY

1. The Congress has the following authorities:

a) Adopting or amending the SLFA Constitution, regulations governing the application of Standing Order of the Congress and the Electoral Code;

[…]

c) Electing the President and the Vice-Presidents and members Executive Committee; d) Ratifying the members of the independent committees;

[…]

q) Shall elect the chairman, deputy chairman and members of the judicial bodies.

Art. 25 ELECTIONS

1. Elections shall be conducted by secret ballot.

2. The proceedings of the elections shall be regulated in the SLFA Electoral Code drawn up by the Executive Committee and adopted by the Congress.

[…]

3. A majority (more than 50%) of the valid votes cast is necessary for the election of the President and vice-president(s) of SLFA. If there are more than two candidates for the office of President or for any of the offices of vice-presidents, whoever obtains the lowest number of votes is eliminated after each ballot until only two candidates are left.

[…]

7. Blank ballot papers, invalid votes or electronic votes manipulated in any way as well as abstentions shall be disregarded when calculating the majority.

8. Candidatures for any of the positions of the Executive Committee and from the Independent Committees shall be sent to the general secretariat at least thirty (30) days before the relevant elective Congress. The official list of candidates must be passed to the Members of SLFA at least 15 days before the Congress at which the Executive Committee shall be elected or at which the Independent Committees (i.e. electoral committees and judicial bodies) shall be ratified. The provisions of this paragraph shall also apply when elections take place during an Extraordinary Congress.

Ratification of the Independent Committee members

9. The General Assembly ratifies the chairpersons, deputy chairpersons and members of the independent committees (i.e. electoral committees and judicial bodies).

[…]

Art. 27 ORDINARY CONGRESS AGENDA

1. The General Secretary shall draw up the Agenda based on proposals from the Executive Committee and the members.

2. The Congress Agenda shall include the following mandatory items:

a) A declaration that the Congress has been convened and composed in compliance with the SLFA Constitution;
b) Approval of Agenda;
c) An Address by the President;
[…]
r) Election of the President, Vice President and members of the Executive committee (if applicable);
s) Election of the Electoral Committee and the Election Appeal Committee (if applicable);
t) Any further items proposed by the members of the Executive Committee of the SLFA provided it complies with art. 27 par. 1.

3. The agenda of the Ordinary Congress may be altered, provided 2/3 of the members present at the Congress and eligible to vote agree such a motion.
4. The Congress shall not make a decision on any point not included in the agenda.

[…]

B. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Art. 32 COMPOSITION
1. The Executive Committee consists of eleven (11) members;
a) One (1) President
b) One (1) First Vice-President
c) One (1) Second Vice-president
d) The Chairman of each of the four (5) regional associations
e) Three (3) congress elected members

2. The President, the Vice-presidents and the members of the Executive Committee shall be elected in accordance with article 25 of these statutes. They shall undergo an integrity check in accordance with Annex A of this Constitution, to be conducted by the Ethics Board, prior to their election or re-election. […]

Art. 34 POWERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
[…]
a) Shall prepare and convene the Ordinary and Extraordinary Congress of SLFA
[…]

C. PRESIDENT
Art. 37 PRESIDENT
1. The President represents SLFA legally.
2. He is primarily responsible for:
a) Implementing the decision passed by the Congress and the Executive Committee through the General Secretariat.
b) Ensuring the effective functioning of the bodies of SLFA in order that they achieve the objectives described in these statutes;
c) Supervising the work of the General Secretariat;
d) Relations between SLFA and its member, FIFA, CAF, WAFA political bodies and other organizations.

3. The President shall preside over the Congress, the Executive Committee and Emergency Committee meetings and those committees of which he has been appointed chairman.
4. The President shall have an ordinary vote on the Executive Committee and whenever votes are equal, shall have a casting vote.
5. In the event of the death of the President or in the event the President is not able to attend Executive Committee Meetings for a period of Six (6) months, the First Vice-President deputizes and an Extraordinary Congress shall be convened by the First Vice-President within ninety (90) days and a new President shall be elected.

[…]

G. INDEPENDENT COMMITTEES
Art 58 Independent committees
1. The independent committees as well as their individual members shall conduct their activities and perform their duties entirely independently but always in the interests of SLFA and in accordance with its Statutes and regulations.
2. The chairperson, deputy chairperson and members of the independent committees shall be elected by the Congress for a period of four years and may only be relieved of their duties by the Congress. They shall not belong to any other body of SLFA and they shall undergo an integrity check, to be conducted by the Ethics Board, prior to their election or re-election and shall fulfil the independence requirements contained in par. 5 below. […]

[…]

Art. 60 JUDICIAL BODIES
1. The judicial bodies of SLFA are:
a) The Disciplinary Committee;
b) The Appeals Committee;
c) The Ethics Board
2. The judicial bodies are to be composed in such a way that the members, together, have the knowledge, abilities and specialist experience that is necessary for the due completion of their tasks and duties. The chairpersons and deputy chairpersons of the judicial bodies shall be qualified to practice law.
3. All members of the judicial bodies (including the chairpersons and deputy chairpersons) shall undergo an integrity check prior to their election or re-election which shall be conducted by the Ethics Board. […]
5. The chairpersons, deputy chairpersons and other members of the judicial bodies shall be elected by the Congress upon proposal of the Executive Committee and shall not be members of any other body of SLFA."
[…]

Art. 82 FINAL DISPOSITIONS
UNFORSEEN CONTINGENCIES AND FORCE MAJURE
Any matter not provided for under these statutes or cases of force majeure shall be settled by the Executive Committee, whose decisions shall be final."

SLFA ETHICS CODE AND REGULATIONS – 2020 EDITION

"[…]

Article 38 Standard of proof

The members of the Ethics Committee shall judge and decide on the basis of their comfortable satisfaction.

[…]"

SLFA ELECTORAL CODE 2012

"*Article 1 Scope of Application*

This code is applicable to presidential elections as well as the elections for members of the executive committee, the judicial bodies, the electoral committee and the appeal committee.

[…]

Article 4 – Election

1. *The Electoral committee is elected, in accordance with the provision of this code by the Congress for a term of four years at the final ordinary Congress before the elective congress of the executive. […]*

[…]

Article 6 Duties

1. *The electoral committee is responsible for all tasks relating to the organization, running and supervision of the elective congress. In particular, it is responsible for:*
   a) *Strictly enforcing the members organization's statues and regulations;*
   b) *Strictly enforcing the statues, directives and regulations of FIFA, SLFA and CAF;*
   c) *Strictly enforcing electoral code;*
   d) *Strictly enforcing the statutory deadlines for elections;*
   e) *Distributing information to the members of the Congress as well as to government bodies, the media and the public;*
   f) *Managing relations with government bodies (where necessary);*
   g) *The candidature procedure (launch, distribution of information, evaluation, publication OF OFFICIAL LIST ETC.);*
   h) *Organising, in administrative and technical terms, the elective general assembly;*
   i) *Drawing up the list of voters in accordance with the association's statutory provisions;*
   j) *Verifying the identity of the voters (in collaboration with a bailiff, if necessary) appointed for this purpose;*
   k) *The voting procedure;*
   l) *All other tasks necessary to ensure the smooth running of the electoral process.[…]*

[…]

Article 8 Decisions

All of the electoral committee's decisions must be passed by an absolute majority of the valid votes cast. If a vote is tied, the chairman of the electoral committee shall have the

casting vote. Decisions are recorded in minutes signed by the chairman and the secretary of the electoral committee. Appeals against the electoral committee's decisions may be lodged only with election appeal committee of the SLFA, to the exclusion of the possibility of appealing said decisions before any other body, particularly a government body.

[...]

Article 10 Submission of candidatures
Candidatures shall be sent or delivered to the general secretariat of the SLFA at least 30 days before the Elective Congress is held.

Article 11 The Examination of candidatures
1. *Candidatures shall be examined by the electoral committee within 23 days of the deadline for their submission.*
2. *The candidates shall be informed of the decision of the electoral committee's examination within the same period of 23 days.*
3. *The list of candidates shall be published.*

Article 12 Appeal Procedure
1. *The election appeal committee is constituted of three members who must be elected by the congress at the same time as the members of the electoral committee. One of these members shall have legal training.*
2. *Any appeal, with its reasons, shall be sent by registered post or delivered in exchange for confirmation of receipt to the general secretariat of the SLFA within 4 days of receipt of the electoral committee's decision.*
3. *Appeals shall be considered by the election appeal committee within 4 days of their receipt by the general secretariat.*
4. *The decisions of the election appeal committee are final and may not be monitored by any government body.*

Article 13 Distribution of the final official list
The final official list of candidates shall be sent to all the members of the congress and, where necessary, to the relevant government bodies no less than 14 days before the elective congress is held. It shall also be published in the press.

Article 14 Deadline for convoking an elective congress
An elective congress shall be convoked the requisite number of days before it takes place as stipulated in the SLFA'S statutes. Notification shall be addressed to all the members of the Congress and, where necessary, to the relevant government bodies. The elective congress shall be announced through the media.

Article 15 Duties of the electoral committee
The duties of the electoral committees are as follows:
a) to monitor the voting procedure during the elective congress using the electoral register that it has compiled;
b) to count the votes;

c) to take any decision that is necessary regarding the validity or invalidity of ballot papers;
d) in general, to pass a definitive decision on any matters relating to the voting procedure during the elective congress;
e) to draft official minutes of the election and distribute them to the members;
f) to declare the official results; […]

[…]
Article 19 Vote
1. The chairman of the electoral committee shall explain in detail the voting procedure (urn, ballot papers, valid and invalid ballot papers, count, required, majorities, results etc) and cite any relevant statutory or legislative provisions.
2. The chairman of the electoral committee calls in turn each member of the Congress who has the right to vote and invites him to move to the front of the hall where the election is taking place.
3. Once called, the member moves to the front of the hall and, after signing, he receives his ballot paper.
4. The member then completes his ballot paper in the polling booth designated for this purpose.
5. The member in question deposits his ballot paper in the urn, signs the electoral register and then returns to his seat.[…]

[…]

Article 20 General principles, decisions in the event of dispute
1. Only the members of the electoral committee may take part in the count. All operations (opening the urn, counting the ballot papers, counting the votes etc.) shall be carried out in a way that can be followed clearly by the members of the Congress.
2. In the event of dispute regarding the validity or invalidity of a ballot paper, the validity or invalidity of a vote, the drafting of the minutes, the declaration of the results or any other matter relating to the counting procedure, the electoral committee's decision shall be final.

Article 21 Invalid ballot papers
1. The following are considered invalid:
a) ballot papers that do not bear the official distinctive marks defined by the electoral committee;
b) ballot papers that bear any words other than the names of the candidates;
c) ballot papers that are illegible or have been defaced:
d) ballot papers that bear identifying marks.
[…]

[…]

Article 24 Declaration of final results

1. *After each round of the election, the chairman of the electoral committees shall declare the results officially to the members of the Congress. The minutes are to be drafted by the General Secretary and signed by all the member of the electoral committee.*
2. *The final minutes shall be distributed to the members of electoral committee. They shall be entered in the record of the deliberations of the Congress.*"

SLFA ELECTION APPEALS GUIDELINES 2021

"*1.1 General Interpretation*

*"**committee**" means the SLFA Election Appeals Committee as established by the SLFA Electoral Code of 2012. […]*

[…]

Jurisdiction

2.5 The Committee shall be competent to hear appeals from the decisions and rulings of the Electoral Committee in accordance with the Code and the SLFA Statute.[…]

Appeals, how made

4.1 An appeal may be lodged as of right from decisions, sanctions and or rulings of the Electoral Committee in accordance with this code.

[…]

Procedural rules

5.4 The procedural rules governing the Judicial Bodies of SLFA shall apply mutatis mutandis to all proceedings of the committee.

[…]

Evaluation of evidence

6.4. During the proceedings, the party shall submit all relevant facts and evidence to the Committee when requested to do so.

6.5 Any addition evidence may be submitted and produced before the Committee and the Committee shall have absolute discretion regarding the evaluation such evidence."

STANDING ORDER OF THE CONGRESS – 2012 [EDITION]

"*Article 2 Chair*

1. *The President shall chair the Congress. If the President is unable to at[tend] the longest serving vice-president available shall deputise. If none o[f the] vice-presidents is present, the Congress shall elect a member of [the] Executive Committee as chairman.*
2. *The chair shall ensure that the Congress is conducted in strict co[mpliance] with these Standing Orders, open and close the Congress and debates, unless the Congress decides otherwise, grant delegates permission to s[peak] and conduct all discussions.*
3. *The chair shall be responsible for maintaining order during debates [and] may take the following action against any Congress participant [who] disturb the debates:*
   a. a call to order

b. reprimand
c. exclusion from one or more sessions.

4. *If an appeal is made against such action, the Congress shall decide immediately without debate.*

[…]

Article 6 Speakers

1. *Permission to speak is granted in the order in which it is requested. [A] speaker may not start speaking until he has obtained permission to [do]so. Speakers shall address the Congress from the rostrum or any pl[ace] designated by the Chair intended for this purpose.*

[…]

Article 8 Procedural motions and closing of debates

1. *If a procedural motion is made, discussion on the main question shall be suspended until a vote has been taken on the motion.*
2. *If a motion is made to close the discussion, it shall immediately be put to the vote without debate. If the motion is approved, permission to speak shall only be granted to those Members who have asked to speak before the vote was taken*
3. *The Chair shall close the discussion unless the Congress decide otherwise by a simple majority of those voting.*

[…]

Article 10 Elections

1. *The electoral committee organizes and supervises the election process and takes all decisions relating to the election.*
2. *The Committee is responsible for all tasks relating to the organization and running and supervision of the elective Congress. In particular, it is responsible for […].*
3. *Elections shall be carried out with ballot papers by secret ballot in accordance with Article 16 and Article 21 of The Electoral Code.*
4. *The Electoral Committee, assisted by the selected scrutineers, shall condu[ct] the distribution and counting of the ballot papers.*
5. *The number of ballot papers that have been distributed shall be announced by the chair before the count.*
6. *If the number of ballot papers returned is equal to or less than the number of ballot papers distributed, the election shall be declared valid. If the number returned exceeds that of the ballot papers distributed, the vote sh[all] be declared null and void and another vote shall be taken immediately.*
7. *The absolute majority shall be calculated in the basis of the number of voting ballot papers collected. Empty ballot papers or invalid votes [are] disregarded. If two or more votes are given in support of one candidate on a ballot paper only one vote shall be valid.*
8. *The chairman. of the Electoral Committee shall announce the result of [each] ballot.*
9. *The General Secretary shall put the ballot papers that have been collec[ted] and counted into envelopes intended for this purpose and seal th[em] immediately. The general secretariat shall keep these envelopes and dest[…] them 90 days after the end of the Congress.*"

5. Re A) Election Committees' selection procedures

136. With regard to the members of the Electoral Committee, which committee, together with the Ethics Board and the Electoral Appeals Committee, oversees the SLFA elections, the Appellants submit, *inter alia*, that its members are to be ratified by the Congress and that they are to pass an integrity check conducted by the Ethics Board.

137. However, according to the Appellants, the members of the Electoral Committee never passed an integrity check, and their nomination was only confirmed by the SLFA Executive Committee and never ratified by the Congress.

138. In the view of the Appellants, this constitutes a violation of mandatory statutory provisions and compromises the independence of the SLFA's judicial bodies, rendering the SLFA Elective Congress unlawful.

139. Moreover, and according to the Appellants, several members of the Electoral Committee and the Ethics Board ought not to have been on these committees, as they are active government employees.

140. While the Respondent does not dispute that the integrity check requirement set out in Article 60 para 3 of the SLFA Constitution is of significance, it is stressed by the Respondent that this provision was drafted on the assumption that there would always be an existing Ethics Board to oversee such integrity checks.

141. However, and in accordance with the applicable rules, the then Ethics Board was dissolved by the Congress in July 2023, and the integrity check was therefore instead conducted by the Executive Committee before the members were then elected by the Congress in April 2025. In any case, no objection to this modus was raised at that point.

142. The Panel initially notes that it is not disputed that the Ethics Board was dissolved by the Congress in July 2023, which is why an integrity check conducted by such board was not a real possibility before the Congress in April 2025.

143. Instead, the Panel finds that the integrity check was conducted in accordance with Article 82 of the SLFA Constitution, which states that "*Any matters not provided for under these statutes or cases of force majeure shall be settled by the Executive Committee whose decision shall be final.*"

144. The Panel further notes that apparently no objections were raised regarding this issue around the time of the Congress in April 2025.

145. Moreover, the Panel notes that the members of the Election Committee were elected for a four-year period at the Congress in April 2025, which appears to be "*the final ordinary Congress before the elective congress*" in accordance with Article 4 of the SLFA Electoral Code.

146. Based on these circumstances, and even if the Panel appreciates that the integrity check was not conducted in strict compliance with Article 60 para 3 of the SLFA Constitution, the Panel is not satisfied that this issue materially affected the integrity and/or outcome

of the SLFA President Election. In fact, the Panel finds that the Appellants themselves failed to establish such actual or potential effect.

147. Moreover, the Panel finds that the Appellants have failed to substantiate and/or prove their allegation that several members of the Electoral Committee and the Ethics Board ought not to have been on these committees, and why or how this might have affected the SLFA President Election.

6. Re B) Alleged violation of candidate deadlines set by SLFA

148. Article 25 para 8 of the SLFA Constitution reads as follows:

"*Candidatures for any of the positions of the Executive Committee and from the Independent Committees shall be sent to the general secretariat at least thirty (30) days before the relevant elective Congress. The official list of candidates must be passed to the Members of SLFA at least 15 days before the Congress at which the Executive Committee shall be elected or at which the Independent Committees (i.e. electoral committees and judicial bodies) shall be ratified. The provisions of this paragraph shall also apply when elections take place during an Extraordinary Congress.*"

149. The Appellants submit, *inter alia*, that the SLFA did not make decisions on candidates' eligibility sufficiently in advance of the elections as required by the SLFA Constitution and the SLFA Electoral Code, as neither the 30-day rule applying to the secretariat nor the 15-day rule applying to the members of the SLFA was respected. Moreover, pursuant to the Electoral Roadmap, the final list of candidates was to be communicated to the members of the SLFA on 17 July 2025.

150. The Appellants further submit that such rules do not account for the possibility that a candidate can be declared ineligible by the Ethics Board, which was in fact what happened to, *inter alia*, Ms Bangura, who, as a consequence, had to file appeal to the CAS with a request for provisional measures in order to be able to be declared eligible for the SLFA President Election.

151. Thus, these circumstances significantly impeded Ms Bangura's democratic rights to campaign and stand in a timely manner, based on which the Appellants submit that the SLFA President Election ought to be overturned.

152. The Respondent on the other hand first of all submits that the 30-day rule set out in Article 25 para 8 of the SLFA Constitution concerns an obligation of the candidates, which in any case was complied with.

153. With regard to the alleged violation of the above-mentioned 15-day rule, the Respondent submits that it complied with this rule as the final list of candidates was passed to its members on 19 July 2025.

154. The Panel initially notes that it appears undisputed that the names of the presidential candidates were passed to the members of the SLFA on 19 July 2025 before the SLFA President Election, which took place on 2 August 2025.

155. Without discussing whether the 15-day rule included in Article 25 para 8 of the SLFA Constitution does in fact also apply to presidential candidates, and not only to "*positions of the Executive Committee and from the Independent Committees*", and whether the passing of the names of the candidates on 19 July 2025 was in compliance with such a deadline (depending on the counting), the Panel notes that, in any case, the names of the presidential candidates were passed to the SLFA members two days later than the deadline set out in the Electoral Roadmap.

156. The Panel further notes that due to the Ethics Board Decision dated 18 July 2025, Ms Bangura had to file an appeal with the CAS requesting provisional measures in order for her to be able to participate in the SLFA President Election.

157. The Panel notes in this regard that Ms Bangura stated in her testimony at the hearing that due to the Ethics Board Decision, she had to stop her campaign for a period of time, during which she was not able to talk to any people regarding her candidacy.

158. Moreover, Ms Bangura submitted that the Ethics Board Decision took confidence away from her supporters and that she had to let her campaign team go.

159. The Panel notes that the Appellants do not appear to challenge the legality of the SLFA rules and regulations regarding deadlines etc. in connection with presidential elections, but simply submit that the alleged violation and abridgement of the deadlines set out, not least in the Electoral Roadmap, severely interfered with the democratic rights of the presidential candidates.

160. The Panel appreciates that Ms Bangura's campaign might have been affected by the Ethics Board Decision to some extent.

161. However, the Panel does not find that any consequences of the Ethics Board Decision which might have interfered with Ms Bangura's campaign are *per se* to be seen in connection with, or as a consequence of, the failure to pass the final list of presidential candidates on 17 July 2025, not least given the circumstance that Ms Bangura did in fact obtain the Order on Provisional Measures from the CAS, which made her, at least provisionally, eligible.

162. The Panel further notes, for the sake of good order, that it finds no evidence on file of any similar request filed by Mr Brima which might have been affected by the late passing of the list of presidential candidates.

163. As such, and even if the Panel appreciates that the final list of presidential candidates was passed to the members of the SLFA one or two days late, the Panel is not satisfied that this issue materially affected the integrity and/or outcome of the SLFA President Election.

7. Re C) Alleged tampering with delegates list

164. Article 21 of the SLFA Constitution reads, *inter alia*, as follows:

> "*2. Delegates must belong to the Member that they represent and be appointed or elected by the appropriate body of the member. They must also be able to produce evidence of this upon request. Delegates for the Executive Committee for the premier league clubs shall be either the chairman or its representative.*
>
> *3. Each member has the right to vote in Congress. Only the delegates present are entitled to vote. Each delegate has one voting right. Voting by proxy or by letter is not permitted.*"

165. The Appellants submit that the list of delegates who had a right to vote in the elections at the SLFA Elective Congress was manipulated and that six individuals who were supposed to vote on behalf of their respective SLFA members were excluded incorrectly.

166. The Respondent on the other hand submits that this is not the case and that all replacements of delegates were done in accordance with due process by the Electoral Committee.

167. The Panel initially notes that following the convocation of the SLFA Elective Congress, the SLFA members were requested to submit the names of their respective delegate(s) for the said congress in order for a list of delegates to be drafted by the Electoral Committee.

168. This caused a number of disputes regarding the determination of the correct delegate to represent some of the SLFA members. As such, regarding six of the SLFA members, the Electoral Committee received two conflicting names, all contending to be the rightful delegate of the respective member.

169. According to the Minutes of an Electoral Committee meeting on 30 July 2025, and as set out in the Appealed Decision, such disputes were dealt with on a case-by-case basis by the Electoral Committee.

170. Thus, on 1 August 2025, the final list of delegates for the SLFA Elective Congress was drafted by the Electoral Committee, based on which the Acting General Secretary, Mr Bawoh, received several letters of complaint. However, the final list of delegates remained the same regardless of such complaints.

171. The Panel further notes that pursuant to Article 6 of the Electoral Code, the Electoral Committee is "*responsible for all tasks relating to the organization, running and supervision of the elective congress*" and thus, *inter alia*, responsible for "*i) Drawing up the list of voters in accordance with association's statutory provisions*" and "j*) Verifying the identity of the voters […] appointed for this purpose.*"

172. Thus, and as a starting point, the Panel finds that the Electoral Committee is competent to deal with the question of who is to represent an SLFA member at an elective congress when two or more persons submit to be such a representative.

173. The Panel further notes that it appears undisputed that each dispute was dealt with on a case-by-case basis at the Electoral Committee meeting on 30 July 2025.

174. Moreover, the Panel notes that the Appellant failed to submit any concrete evidence proving or even indicating that any of the decisions made by the Electoral Committee was evidently wrong or based on improper or even irrelevant grounds.

175. In this regard, the Panel further notes that no appeals regarding such decisions were eventually filed by the SLFA members concerned or the (potential) delegates concerned.

176. Finally, and for the sake of good order, the Panel notes that it does not find it decisive that the Acting General Secretary, Mr Bawoh, in his email dated 1 August 2025 stated that the Electoral Committee "*ignored*" his advice and "*decided to use the number game instead of the statute*".

177. First of all, the role of the Acting General Secretary in this regard is only consultative, and secondly, the accusation regarding the "*number game instead of the statute*" is not substantiated in any way.

178. In this regard, the Panel notes that during the hearing, Mr Bawoh explained that he agreed that he only offered his view on the matter, but that it was the Electoral Committee which had the competence. Moreover, Mr Bawoh explained that the phrase "*number game*" referred to the voting procedure.

179. Based on the circumstances, the Panel does not find itself convinced that the final list of delegates issued on 1 August 2025 and/or the dismissal of the subsequent protest was done in contravention of the applicable rules.

180. Moreover, and for the sake of good order, the Panel also notes that the Appellant failed to substantiate how and to what extent the allegedly wrong replacement of six delegates potentially affected the integrity and/or outcome of the SLFA President Election.

181. Finally, and with regard to the timing of release of the final list of delegates for the SLFA Elective Congress, the Panel agrees with the Electoral Appeals Committee's finding that the Electoral Code does not specify a deadline for such release.

182. And even though the Panel appreciates the recommendation of the Electoral Appeals Committee to introduce a clear rule requiring such release at least 48 hours in advance in order to allow for a meaningful verification, the Panel does not find that the timing of the release the final list of delegates for the SLFA Elective Congress in this case, which apparently was caused by the receipt of several objections and counter-nominations, materially prejudiced any of the presidential candidates.

8. Re D) Allegedly improper convening of elections

183. The Appellant submits, *inter alia*, that pursuant to, *inter alia*, Articles 20 and 37 of the SLFA Constitution, the President of the SLFA must convene and preside over an elective congress, in order for such elections to be correctly and legitimately held. Additionally, in the absence of the President, the First Vice-President of the SLFA must preside.

184. This never happened as neither the President nor the First Vice-President attended the SLFA Elective Congress. Therefore, the correct procedure would have been to have the entire SLFA Executive Committee oversee and preside over the Elective Congress, which also did not happen.

185. Instead, the Second Vice-President, Mr Tarawally, presided over the SLFA Elective Congress in direct violation of the SLFA rules and regulations, which provide no legal basis for the Second Vice-President to assume a presidential function or to convene a congress under any circumstances.

186. Moreover, several mandatory items on the agenda were never observed, which resulted in a patent defect in the electoral process. As such, the presidential election ought to be overturned according to the Appellants.

187. The Respondent on the other hand submits that the SLFA Elective Congress was convened and presided over in accordance with the applicable rules and regulations of the SLFA.

188. In this regard, it is submitted by the Respondent that the Second Vice-President only presided over the SLFA Elective Congress due to the President's ban from football-related activities, the First Vice-President's unexplained absence and that the majority of the delegates confirmed the decision to proceed with the Second Vice-President, which decision was made in accordance with the SLFA Constitution and the Standing Order of the Congress.

189. With regard to the convening of the SLFA Elective Congress, the Panel notes that pursuant to Article 34 b) of the SLFA Constitution, the Executive Committee has the power and duty to, *inter alia*, "prepare and convene the Ordinary and Extraordinary Congress of SLFA".

190. Based on the information on file, the Panel is satisfied that that SLFA Elective Congress was in fact convened by the Executive Committee in accordance with the SLFA Constitution.

191. With regard to the matter of who was competent to preside over the SLFA Elective Congress, the Panel initially notes that it is not disputed that neither the SLFA President, Mr Brima, who in accordance with the Ethics Board Decision was banned from taking part in any football-related activity, including the SLFA Elective Congress, nor the SLFA First Vice-President attended the SLFA Elective Congress, which instead was presided over by the SLFA Second Vice-President, Mr Tarawally.

192. Moreover, it is not disputed that according to Article 37 para 3 of the SLFA Constitution, "*The President shall preside over the Congress* […]", while the Panel finds that Article 37 para 5 of the said Constitution does not directly apply to the SLFA Elective Congress. The Panel notes in this regard, *inter alia*, that Article 37 para 3 of the SLFA Constitution appears to deal with absence for a period of 6 months from "Executive Committee meetings" and not from congresses.

193. As such, the Panel agrees with the SLFA Electoral Appeals Committee that the SLFA does not contain any provision which expressly addresses the matter of (temporary) delegation of such power in case of temporary absence or incapacity.

194. However, the Panel also agrees with the SLFA Electoral Appeals Committee that Article 2 para 1 of the Standing Order of the Congress provides for a practical mechanism in such case, stating as follows:

"*2. The President shall chair the Congress. If the President is unable to attend the longest serving vice-president available shall deputise. If none of the vice-presidents is present, the Congress shall elect a member of [the] Executive Committee as chairman.*"

195. It is not disputed that the Second Vice-President, Mr Tarawally, was the "*longest serving vice-president*" present at the SLFA Elective Congress, based on which the Panel finds that it was appropriate for him to preside over the said congress based on the wording of the said article. The Panel notes in this regard that in this specific context, the terms "*preside*" and "*chair*" have the same meaning, which does not appear to be disputed by the Parties.

196. The Panel notes that the Appellants submit that the Standing Order of the Congress is not applicable as*, inter alia*, it came into force in 2012 and, thus, before the adoption of the SLFA Constitution in December 2019. As such, according to the Appellant, the SLFA Constitution replaces any provision set out in the Standing Order of the Congress.

197. However, the Panel notes in this regard that since the SLFA Constitution explicitly refers to "*the standing orders of the Congress*" (see Article 20 para 3), and since it is undisputed that the Standing Order of the Congress, which came into force in 2012, is the latest edition of such standing orders, the logical conclusion is that the Standing Order of the Congress was intended to still be in force, also after the adoption of the SLA Constitution in 2019, and that it was intended as a supplement set of rules for certain matters regarding SLFA congresses not directly dealt with in the SLFA Constitution.

198. As such, the Panel finds that the Standing Order of the Congress was applicable to the SLFA Elective Congress.

199. The Panel further notes that pursuant to Article 82 of the SLFA Constitution "*Any matters not provided for under these statutes or cases or [force] majeure shall be settled by the Executive Committee, whose decisions shall be final.*"

200. As such, the Panel finds that the Executive Committee was in fact competent to and had sufficient legal basis to decide that the SLFA Elective Congress should proceed, regardless of the absence of the President and, thus, be presided over by the Second Vice-President.

201. Moreover, and as explained by Mr Mahmood during the hearing, the fact that such a decision was made with reference to the Standing Order of the Congress was openly discussed before the decision was adopted.

202. In this regard, the Panel further notes that the decision of the Executive Committee, which was made in accordance with Article 2 of the Standing Order of the Congress, was recommend by the Acting General Secretary and also confirmed by a majority vote of the delegates present at the SLFA Elective Congress.

203. Finally, the Panel finds that the Appellants failed to establish why the Second Vice-President's chairing the SLFA Elective Congress would have/had any negative impact on the integrity and/or outcome of the SLFA President Election.

204. Thus, the Panel is not satisfied that this issue materially affected the integrity and/or outcome of the SLFA President Election.

205. The same conclusion applies to the alleged deviation from the mandatory issues on the agenda pursuant to Article 27 of the SLFA Congress.

9. Re E) Alleged intimidation and police brutality

206. The Appellants submit, *inter alia*, that the brutal and violent treatment and exclusion of Mr Gordon constituted a blatant violation of human and democratic rights and that the president election must be nullified as a result.

207. The Respondent, on the other hand, submits, *inter alia*, that even if it accepts that it owed a duty of care to all delegates, it did not have any influence on the behaviour and actions by the local police. Furthermore, it is submitted that the exclusion of Mr Gordon was warranted due to his refusal to respect of the decision to proceed with the congress under the chairing of the Second Vice-President and since he continued to speak and prevent the congress from proceeding, despite numerous requests not to.

208. The Panel notes that it is not disputed that Mr Gordon, who was a delegate at the SLFA Elective Congress, was given the floor to speak at the SLFA Elective Congress and, together with other delegates, raised serious concerns regarding, and objections to, the decision to proceed with the said congress under the chairmanship of the Second Vice-President.

209. The Panel further notes that rather loud and emotional discussions took place for a substantial amount of time and that the congress was suspended for a long period of time in order to facilitate discussions regarding the concerns raised.

210. In this regard, the Panel also notes that Mr Gordon, together with other delegates, continued to raise their concerns loudly, after having been requested to sit down in order to proceed with the congress.

211. After having asked Mr Gordon a number of times to stop his loud protesting and accept the decision to proceed with the congress, as confirmed by the majority of the delegates, the Acting General Secretary and the Second Vice-President decided to call for members of the Sierra Leonian police in order to have Mr Gordon escorted out of the congress room.

212. When the police approached Mr Gordon, some pushing and shouting occurred which eventually resulted in Mr Gordon being dragged out of the congress room by a number of police officers and security personnel in a rather violent manner.

213. Mr Gordon was subsequently arrested by the police and thus not able to cast his vote in the presidential election. Moreover, Mr Gordon, upon his release from the police custody, went to the hospital in order to receive treatment for the bruises and injuries caused by the incident.

214. The Panel agrees with the Electoral Appeals Committee in this regard that the SLFA owed a duty of care to all delegates and further finds that the handling of Mr Gordon by the police and security personnel appears to have been excessive, unnecessarily heavy-handed and violent, and not at all prudent for a democratic congress within the international football community.

215. However, the Panel also notes that legally based decisions, not least procedural decisions, made by a competent organ during a legally convened congress must be respected by the delegates in order, *inter alia*, to allow for such congress to proceed accordingly, without the significant delays caused by Mr Gordon and other delegates lasting over three hours.

216. As such, based on the circumstances of this matter and the decision to proceed with the SLFA Elective Congress, not least since the Panel finds this decision to be sufficiently legally based, the Panel appreciates that reasonable measures might have been necessary in order to facilitate the congress to resume/continue.

217. The Panel notes in this regard that pursuant to Article 2 para 3 of the Standing Order of the Congress "*The chair shall be responsible for maintaining order during debates and may take the following action against any Congress participant who disturb the debates: […] c) exclusion from one or more sessions.*"

218. And even if the Panel finds that the exclusion of a delegate from a congress session is a very serious measure and that such exclusion must in general be seen as the very last resort, the Panel appreciates to some extent, and based on what happened during the congress at this point, that such a decision was considered to be the prudent and unfortunately necessary measure given the circumstances.

219. The Panel finds it important to stress in this regard that it does not find it proven that it was the intention of either the Acting General Secretary or the Second Vice-President, when the decision to request assistance from the police was made, that the exclusion of Mr Gordon should be conducted in the violent manner, which was eventually the result.

220. Moreover, the Panel does not find any basis for concluding that either the Acting General Secretary, the Second Vice-President or any other SLFA official had any influence in the subsequent arrest of Mr Gordon.

221. The Panel appreciates that the excessive and violent treatment of Mr Gordon might have caused some internal concerns among the delegates at the congress regarding their own behaviour at the congress. However, the Panel does not consider that the events described amounted to evidence of systematic intimidation.

222. The Panel does not find itself satisfied that these circumstances in a material way affected the integrity and/or outcome of the SLFA President Election.

223. In this regard, the Panel finds that the Appellants failed to discharge their burden of proof regarding how the specific circumstances allegedly had such an outcome.

224. The Panel further notes that Mr Gordon, due to his arrest, was prevented from casting his vote in the presidential election and the Panel condemns this from a democratic point of view. However, there was not a sufficient basis to conclude that it had a material effect on the result of the election in light of all the circumstances of this particular case, not least since the presidential election was decided by a very clear margin of 43 to 11.

225. As in all such cases, no conclusion can be drawn by the Panel as to which candidate Mr Gordon would have voted for, if for any of the two candidates.

10. Re F) Secrecy of the presidential election – marked ballots

226. Article 25 of the SLFA Constitution states, *inter alia*, as follows:

> "*1. Elections shall be conducted by secret ballot.*
>
> *2. The proceedings of the elections shall be regulated in the SLA Electoral Code drawn up by the Executive Committee and adopted by the Congress. […]*"

227. Moreover, pursuant to Article 19 of the SLFA Electoral Code:

> "*2. The chairman of the electoral committee calls in turn each member of the Congress who has the right to vote and invites him to move to the front of the hall where the election is taking place.*
>
> *3. Once called, the member moves to the front of the hall and, after signing, he receives his ballot paper.*
>
> *4. The member then completes his ballot paper in the polling booth designated for this purpose.*

5. The member in question deposits his ballot paper in the urn, signs the electoral register and then returns to his seat. […]."

228. Finally, Article 21 of the SLFA Electoral Code states, *inter alia*, as follows:

"*Invalid ballot papers*

1. The following are considered invalid:

[…]

d) ballot papers that bear identifying marks

[…]"

229. The Panel initially notes that it is not disputed that in accordance with rules set out in the SLFA Electoral Code, the delegates present at the time of the presidential election and who had the right to vote were all called by name one by one, asked to sign a voter list before casting their respective votes and then again asked to sign a similar voter list after having put their ballots in a ballot box and cast their respective votes.

230. Moreover, it is undisputed that the ballots were all serial numbered and that the first three voters apparently received a ballot with a number matching their respective number on the voter lists.

231. However, the fourth delegate who was called to vote did openly object to such modus, as it made it possible to identify the vote cast by a specific person.

232. Following such objections, the matter was discussed between the relevant SLFA officials, following which the remaining ballots were then put in a transparent receptacle and shuffled in order to ensure that each voter would receive an arbitrary ballot paper.

233. According to the SLFA, the voters then picked an arbitrary ballot paper, while the Appellants submit that the delegates were handed the ballot papers from the official sitting next to the receptacle.

234. Based on these facts, the Appellants submits, *inter alia*, that the presidential election must be overturned, as the ballots were marked, thus making it possible to connect every vote with its delegate and violate the integrity of the said election.

235. According to the Appellants, it is the cumulative nature of publicly calling voters out in front of the Congress, subject to a numerical list, and the marked ballots that compromised secrecy. The fear of retribution may have inhibited delegates from voting according to their conscience.

236. The Respondent, on the other hand, submits that the entire voting process was in general done in accordance with the guidelines set out by the Electoral Committee and in accordance with Article 6 of the Electoral Code. Moreover, there was no intimidation towards any of the delegates, nor was there any breach of secrecy.

237. The Panel initially notes that the voting procedure according to which each delegate is called by name in order to first sign one voter list in order to receive/pick up his/her ballot and then, upon having cast his/her vote, is asked to sign a similar voter list is in line with the procedure set out in Article 19 of the SLFA Electoral Code.

238. This appears not, in itself, to be disputed by the Appellants.

239. The Panel appreciates that such a procedure can be an effective measure in order to prevent anybody from casting his/her vote more than once.

240. The Panel further notes that the Appellants do not submit that any of the counted votes were manipulated, nor that the counting of the cast votes and the declaration of the result were not done in accordance with the applicable rules and regulations.

241. However, the Panel finds that the fact that the ballots were in fact serial numbered and that the voting delegates were initially handed a ballot with a serial number corresponding to the respective delegates number on the two voter lists that were signed give rise to certain concerns regarding the integrity of the presidential election, since such a procedure, at least in theory, would make it possible to identify which candidate an individual delegate had voted for.

242. The Panel does appreciate, however, as testified to by Mr Bawoh, the then Acting General Secretary, and submitted by the Respondent, that numbering the ballots was an anti-fraud measure, as it was a simple way of making sure that only the exact number of ballots were used and that no ballots were copied or in any other way manipulated.

243. The Panel further notes that it does not endorse the Appellants' submission that Article 21 para 1 d) of the SLFA Electoral Code is applicable to this situation. The Panel finds that the said article deals with whether or not ballots, which might be subsequently altered, manipulated or otherwise appear different from the original version, are to be considered invalid before the counting of votes. Thus, the fact that the ballots were all originally serial numbered by the SLFA before the election as an anti-fraud measure does not *per se* make these ballots invalid pursuant to the said provision.

244. Instead, the Panel finds that the main issue to be decided is whether the numbering of the ballots in connection with the procures and circumstances under which the presidential election was conducted can be considered as having materially affected the integrity and/or outcome of the SLFA President Election.

245. The Panel initially finds that, based on the evidence on file, it appears that the first three delegates called to cast their vote during the presidential election at the SLFA Elective Congress did so using numbered ballots, which numbers matched the same delegates' numbers on the two voter lists signed.

246. Thus, with regard to these three votes, the Panel finds this part of the presidential election to have been conducted in violation of Article 25 of the SLFA Constitution as such ballots cannot be considered to be "*secret*", given the circumstance that they were

potentially identifiable and connectable to the respective delegates having cast such votes.

247. With regard to the subsequent 51 delegate votes, the Panel initially notes that it is not disputed that the remaining numbered ballots were put in a receptacle and mixed and shuffled in order to make it arbitrary, and thus unidentifiable, which ballots each delegate would use for casting his/her vote.

248. The Panel notes in this regard that it is not entirely clear whether such ballots were then picked up by each delegate themselves or whether some of the delegates had their respective ballot handed to them after it was picked up from the receptacle by the official sitting next to it. Or if this procedure differed from delegate to delegate.

249. In their respective testimonies before the Panel during the hearing, Mr Sanu and Mr Mansaray, who were voting delegates at the SLFA Elective Congress, explained that they were handed a ballot from a person sitting next to the receptacle from which the ballots were picked up.

250. However, Mr Bawoh, the then Acting General Secretary, and Mr Bainda, the Chairman of the Electoral Committee, both testified that each delegate was asked to pick up his/her own ballot from the receptacle.

251. In addition to considering the said testimonies, the Panel examined the video material on file which was recorded during the election process.

252. However, based on the said video material on file, the Panel was not able to conclude whether the ballots in general were picked up by each delegate or whether they were in fact generally handed to the delegates by the person sitting next to the receptacle as stated by two of the witnesses.

253. The Panel notes in this regard that based on the fact that it is undisputed that the ballots were actually mixed and shuffled in the receptacle before, thus arbitrarily finding their way into the hands of the delegates, the Panel is not convinced that it was still possible to identify and connect each vote to its respective delegate, which means, in the Panel's view, that the said election procedure cannot be considered to be in violation of the requirement for secrecy as set out in Article 25 of the SLFA Constitution.

254. The Panel notes in this regard that apparently no delegates present at the time of the presidential election raised any objection regarding the process put in place after the first three delegates had voted, during the SLFA Elective Congress.

255. The Panel finds that this fact speaks in favour of the presumption that the delegates considered that the ballots were no longer identifiable, not least since the issue of secrecy had already been raised once by at least one delegate, which led to the subsequent corrective action taken to preserve the secrecy of the subsequent votes.

256. The Panel further notes that the Appellants submit that the presidential election was conducted under threat and that the fear of retribution may have inhibited some delegates from voting according to their conscience.

257. However, the Panel finds that such a submission has not been sufficiently substantiated by the Appellant for the Panel to accept such a contention.

258. The Panel further notes that even if it finds that the elective process was conducted in violation of Article 25 of the SLFA Constitution for the first three delegates, who had already cast their votes before the ballots were mixed and shuffled, no objection regarding the validity of these votes was apparently ever filed during the SLFA Elective Congress.

259. Moreover, the Panel notes that the outcome of the presidential election was clear following a 43 to 11 vote count.

260. Based on these circumstances and taking into consideration that the burden of proof is on the Appellants in this regard, the Panel finds that the Appellants did not discharge the burden of proving, to the comfortable satisfaction of the Panel, that the circumstance in connection with the ballots and/or the alleged, but unsubstantiated allegations of intimidation of delegates, in a material way affected the integrity and/or outcome of the SLFA President Election.

11. Conclusion

261. In conclusion, the Panel finds that even if a number of procedural issues arose during the SLFA Elective Congress, which in the Panel's view needs to be improved in line with the recommendations set out in the Appealed Decision, the Panel finds that the issues covered by the present appeal did not in a material way, either individually or cumulatively, affect the integrity and/or outcome of the SLFA President Election in a manner which justifies the Panel in setting aside the Appealed Decision and in declaring the SLFA President Election of 2 August 2025 null and void.

262. Moreover, and for the sake of good order, regarding a number of the procedural issues raised by the Appellant above, the Panel is not convinced that those issues are in fact covered by the duties and powers of the Electoral Committee as set out in Article 15 of the SLFA Electoral Code, including the power to declare the SLFA President Election null and void. However, based on the above, the Panel concludes that there is no need to decide on these issues.

IX. COSTS

(…)

ON THE GROUNDS

The Court of Arbitration for Sport rules that:

1. The appeal filed by Ms Aminata Bangura, Slifa FC and Mr Musa Mahmood on 8 September 2025 against the decision rendered by the SLFA Electoral Appeals Committee on 18 August 2025 is dismissed.

2. The decision rendered by the SLFA Electoral Appeals Committee on 18 August 2025 is confirmed.

3. (…).

4. (…).

5. All other or further motions or prayers for relief are dismissed.

Seat of arbitration: Lausanne, Switzerland
Date: 2 November 2026

THE COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT

Lars Hilliger
President of the Panel

David Casserly
Arbitrator

Kwadjo Adjepong OBE
Arbitrator