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International Netball Federation Announces Cancellation of Netball World Youth Cup 2021 due to Covid-19

The International Netball Federation (INF) has announced its decision to cancel the Netball World Youth Cup 2021 (NWYC) which was scheduled to take place from 2-11th December in Suva, Fiji. This difficult decision was made by the INF Board at their meeting on March 12th after taking into consideration all the risks related to hosting the event during the on-going Covid-19 pandemic with the safety and wellbeing of participants and the Fijian population at the heart of the decision.

INF, in consultation with the Fijian Government, the NWYC Organising Committee (OC), and the twenty netball nations who had qualified to take part, identified significant Covid-19 related challenges surrounding the event. A comprehensive risk assessment was undertaken, highlighting a number of challenges including welfare of youth athletes; the inability of teams to adequately plan and prepare together for an intense level of international competition, on-going border closures, travel restrictions including quarantine measures and costs, and the protection of Fiji, a nation which has seen low Covid-19 numbers as of March 2021.



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INF President, Liz Nicholl CBE, said “It is with a heavy heart that we make this decision to cancel the Netball World Youth Cup 2021. Our U21 athletes represent the emerging talent at an international level, and we recognise this announcement will be a significant disappointment for them, for our Members, our fans and indeed for all the netball family. We thank the organising committee for their considerable efforts thus far in planning for the event and for the ongoing support of the Fijian Government in relation to hosting.”

In consultation with the Prime Minister of Fiji Honourable Frank Bainimarama, the Minister for Youth and Sports Hon. Praveen Kumar Bala comments, “Whilst we are disappointed with the decision, we appreciate that it was made in the best interest of all stakeholders. The Fijian Government looks forward to working with INF in the future to host an international event, in an environment that safeguards the health of all people involved.”

The NWYC is the pinnacle of netball competition for emerging players under 21 years of age with INF hosting an U21 International competition every four years since 1988. INF announced on the 8th of February 2017 that Netball Fiji had won the rights to host the second staging of the Netball World Youth Cup. In July 2020 INF announced that due to the on-going Covid-19 pandemic, the NWYC would be postponed from June to December 2021.



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Image:



Image Caption:

A Fiji netball player at the Netball World Youth Cup 2017.

Notes to Editors:

International Netball Federation

Over 20 million people play netball around the world, in more than 80 countries. The International Netball Federation (INF) is the sole, internationally recognised, governing body for netball, affiliated to GAISF, the International World Games Association and the Association of Recognised International Sports Federations (ARISF), receiving funding from the International Olympic Committee.

Currently, 76 National Netball Associations are affiliated to the INF, grouped into five Regions - Africa, Asia, Americas, Europe, and Oceania - each with a respective Regional Federation.

Netball Fiji

Netball Fiji oversees the most popular women's sport in Fiji. Netball is played in primary schools, secondary schools, business house competitions and in weekly club competitions for over 12 affiliated districts in Fiji. Netball has a large amount of grassroots support in Fiji. Netball Fiji delivers its purpose to its members through sufficient resources to remain viable and competitive in



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governance, people, and financial management. Netball Fiji is member of the Oceania Netball Federation (ONF) and is affiliated to the Fiji Associations of Sports & National Olympic Committee.

Netball World Youth Cup

The Netball World Youth Cup is the pinnacle of netball competition for emerging players and has been held every four years since 1988. The INF awarded Fiji Netball with the rights to host Netball World Youth Cup in February 2017. The Netball World Youth Cup, 2021 was due to take place on the island of Viti Levu, Fiji in the capital city of Suva from the 10th – 19th June at the newly renovated Vodafone Arena.

20 teams with players aged under 21 will compete for the title. The host country (Fiji) and the top 4 teams from the NWYC2017 held in Botswana pre-qualified (New Zealand, Australia, England, and Jamaica who finished 5th behind Fiji). The Asia qualifying event took place in July 2019 with Malaysia, Singapore and Sri Lanka qualifying.

The INF Board made the decision in June 2020 to determine the remaining 12 qualifying countries based on INF World Rankings.

The qualifiers for the Netball World Youth Cup 2021 in alphabetical order: Australia, Barbados, Cook Islands, England, Fiji, Jamaica, Malaysia, Malawi, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Samoa, Scotland, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, St Lucia, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, and Wales.