

DRAFT: From Kickoff to Consensus: The FIFA 2026 World Cup and North American Cross-Border Cooperation

(This program is still subject to change. The symposium is scheduled for March 13-14, 2026, 9:00 AM – 5:30 PM each day.)

**University of Houston Law Center
John M. O’Quinn Law Center
Houston, Texas**

March 13–14, 2026

Attire: Business Casual

Symposium Overview

Hosted by the University of Houston Law Center, this two-day international symposium brings together scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to explore the legal, economic, and governance dimensions of the FIFA 2026 World Cup. With the tournament jointly hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico, this event will examine how cross-border cooperation, trade, and human rights frameworks intersect with the world’s most influential sporting event.

Each session will feature 20-minute presentations and audience discussion.

- **Day One:** Light snacks throughout, lunch and keynote speaker. A networking reception with light nibbles will follow the final session.
- **Day Two:** Light breakfast, light snacks throughout, lunch and keynote speaker.

Program Agenda (Time and content subject to adjustment)

Day One – Friday, March 13, 2026

- 9:45 AM** Check-In & Law Center Tour
10:30 AM Welcome & Remarks (*Karen Jones*)
10:45 AM Opening Comments (*Dean Leonard Baynes*)
11:00 AM Program Introduction (*Karen Jones*)

11:10 AM *The FIFA 2026 World Cup in North America – Overview and Key Themes (Brian Michael Cooper, Greenberg Traurig LLP)*

11:30 AM *USMCA Five-Year Review and Regional Integration (Julian Cardenas, Center for U.S. and Mexican Law, University of Houston Law Center)*

11:50 PM Program Introduction (Karen Jones)

12:00 PM Lunch

12:30 PM Keynote speaker (TBD)

Session I: Legal and Institutional Frameworks (1:15 – 2:45 PM)

Moderator: TBD

- **Aparajith Krishnan**, *Cross-Border Enforcement of Digital Ambush Marketing and Unauthorized NFTs in Mega-Events: Legal Gaps in Centralized and Decentralized Platforms*
- **Alberto Ugarte**, *The Soccer Boom in North America: How the 2026 World Cup Redefines Cooperation, Good Governance, and Transparency in Professional Leagues*
- **Frederique Reynertz**, *Governing the Beautiful Game: Can Lex Sportiva meet the Rule of Law?*
- **Alina Gamboa Combs**, *Regional Governance in North America: Local Responses to Global Pressures in the World Cup Context*

2:45 – 3:00 PM Break

Session II: Trade, Labor, and Mobility (3:00 – 4:50 PM)

Moderator: TBD

- **James Nafziger**, *Sports Integration and Expansion Within North America*
- **Cato Willems**, *Women in Football: Equality and Labor Rights from a European Perspective*
- **Isabel López Padilla**, *Offside: Labor Rights Risks in Supply Chains Ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup and Leveraging the USMCA's Protection Framework*
- **Jacob Resendiz**, *The Law of the Land: The Intersection of USMCA and CAS*

- **Rodolfo Rueda Ballesteros and Santiago Isusi Jiménez**, *Mega Sporting Events and International Collaboration: The 2026 World Cup as a Catalyst for Regional Integration in North America*

4:50 PM Final Comments Day One

5:00 PM Networking Reception with Light Nibbles

5:45 PM Close of Day One

Day Two – Saturday, March 14, 2026

9:45 AM Check-In & Light Breakfast

10:00 AM Introduction Day Two (*Karen Jones*)

Session III: Human Rights, Ethics, and Dispute Resolution (10:05 – 10:55AM)

Moderator: *Matt Mitten, Executive Director, National Sports Law Institute, Marquette University Law School*

- **Karen L. Jones**, *From Symbolic Compliance to Enforceable Oversight: Human Rights Due Diligence and the 2026 FIFA World Cup*
- **Frea de Keyzer**, *The Reach of EU Law in Sport Arbitration: Reassessing the Boundaries of Lex Sportiva*

Session IV: Technology, Media, and Cybersecurity (11:00 AM – 11:50 PM)

Moderator: *TBD*

- **Guillermo Mendoza**, *Toward the Construction of a North American Intelligence Community Beyond Security: Trade, Investment, and Technology – A Mexican Perspective*
- **Dionne Koller**, *Sportswashing and American Law*

Session V: Infrastructure and Procurement (12:00 PM – 12:25 PM)

Moderator: *Karen Jones, Executive Director of Global and Graduate Programs, University of Houston Law Center*

- **James Gengaro**, *Money Over Meaning: Infrastructure, Procurement, and the Cost of the Game*
- *TBD*

12:30 PM Lunch

1:00 PM Keynote Speaker (TBD)

1:35 PM Closing Remarks

1:45 PM *Adjourn*

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