

Le Graët apologizes to Zidane for his explosive statements

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Noel Le Graët

Paris, January 10 (PL)-- French Football Federation (FFF) president Noël Le Graët apologized to iconic former player and coach Zinédine Zidane after statements about him that generated widespread backlash.

Le Graët acknowledged that his comments on Sunday on RMC Sport were unfortunate, amid criticism from players, coaches, authorities and parliamentarians of various political persuasions.

"I would like to apologize for these statements that reflect absolutely neither my thinking, nor my consideration for the player he was and the coach he has become," the 81-year-old said in a statement published by the AFP news agency.

The FFF president since 2011 said the day before that he never considered Zidane for the position of Les Bleus coach, in which he was ratified for another four years on Saturday Didier Deschamps, and that he would not even have answered the phone call to the former number 10, world champion with France in 1998 and multiple times on the bench with Real Madrid.

He also said that he did not care about the rumors of "Zizou" being hired by Brazil as coach of the Canarinha, saying: "let him go wherever he wants (...)".

According to Le Graët, he should not have accepted an interview that sought controversy by opposing Deschamps - also a world champion and captain of France-1998 - and Zidane, whom he described as two monuments of French soccer.

The comments unleashed a whirlwind of reactions, including a call for respect for a legend from Les Bleus star Kylian Mbappé and a call for an apology from Sports Minister Amélie Oudéa-Castéra.

Le Graët was already in trouble before this controversy, as the FFF faces an audit and he is dealing with accusations of sexual harassment, which he denies.

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