



# WADA ATHLETE COUNCIL MEETING

## MEETING OUTCOMES

**Thursday 16 March 2023**

**Lausanne, Switzerland**

09:00 – 17:00

In attendance:

### **Members**

- Ben Sandford – (Interim Chair)
- Gaby Ahrens
- Ivan Cosic
- Clare Egan
- Adrian Escobar
- Inaki Gomez
- Jennifer Harss
- Dora Hegyi
- Humphrey Kayange
- Kristen Kit
- Patrick O’Leary
- Olumide Oyedeji
- Ryan Pini
- Ella Sabljak
- Yuhan Tan
- Emma Terho
- Jitske Visser
- Maja Wloszczowska
- Hong Zhang

### **Guests**

- Anna Thorstenson, Athletes’ Anti-Doping Ombuds
- Snežana Samardžić-Marković, Senior Independent Expert, Human Rights (virtual)

### **WADA Representatives**

- Stuart Kemp
- Stacy Spletzer-Jegen
- Witold Banka (part of meeting only)
- Yang Yang (part of meeting only)
- Olivier Niggli (part of meeting only)
- Florence Lefebvre-Rangeon (part of meeting only)
- Samantha Dubois (part of meeting only)
- Catherine MacLean (part of meeting only)

### **Apologies**

- Rodolpho Riskalla
- Alessia Zecchini

## **1. Welcome**

WADA's first in-person Athlete Council (AC) meeting opened on 16 March, the day after WADA's Annual Symposium in Lausanne Switzerland which the AC was invited to attend. The meeting was chaired by WADA's past Athlete Committee Chair Ben Sandford. Ben was heavily involved in WADA's governance reforms and offered to lead the transition of the Athlete Committee to the Athlete Council until elections could take place.

The meeting opened with WADA's President Witold Banka, Vice-President Yang Yang and Director General Olivier Niggli offering the new Council congratulations and WADA's upmost support in making their future vision and plans a success while also emphasizing that the world of Anti-Doping can be complicated, but their doors are always open. A question and answer period ensued.

Members then introduced themselves and shared what brought them to have an interest in clean sport, along with any insight they had on the issue.

## **2. From Athlete Committee to Athlete Council**

After ten years of being on WADA's Athlete Committee which included being Chair for three of them, Ben offered his historical perspective and background around the past Athlete Committee including key legacy projects that the Committee championed. He went on to encourage Council members to get involved and engaged. He emphasized the importance of their roles and suggested a number of ideas for the new Council including creating a strategic plan, forming new communication channels with athletes, further advancing athlete rights, promoting access to legal representation, working with iNADO, more athlete webinars, being involved with the Code Review, education, etc.

## **3. Athlete Council Terms of Reference (ToR): Discussion and Decision**

The new Athlete Council was invited to review the draft Terms of Reference which were drafted by Ben based on the 2022 governance reforms and the previous Athlete Committee ToR and reviewed by WADA Management. Florence Lefebvre-Rangeon, WADA's Deputy Chief Operating Officer, and Samantha Dubois, Governance Manager, participated in the discussion to address certain questions. The document includes an overview of the Council's purpose, objectives and also its reporting structure, eligibility requirements for members, composition of the AC, details on elected positions, removal procedure and working norms.

The final document will be amended to include the group's feedback and will then go to the WADA Foundation Board for formal approval. The AC ToR will be included on WADA's website once approved.

## **4. Overview of Positions in Governance and Standing Committees**

Similar to the ToR, the group had the opportunity to review and discuss the upcoming election procedures for the AC Chair, Vice-Chair and two athlete positions on the Foundation Board. The AC inaugural elections rules were approved following minor amendments requested by the group.

The deadline for nominations is set to Monday 20 March and the election is set for Wednesday 22 March, which will be virtual.

Ben briefly presented the athlete seats on WADA's Standing Committees (i.e., Finance and Administration (F&A) Committee, Education Committee and Health, Medical and Research Committee) and asked the AC how they wanted to select members from the AC to sit on such Committees. The group decided that the selection would be on a case-by-case basis in view of relevant member skills and interest.

The only seat currently opened for an athlete representative was on the F&A Committee. Kristen Kit raised her hand for this position and was selected by the AC to fill this vacant athlete seat. Kristen's appointment to the F&A Committee will be formally approved by WADA's Executive Committee at their next meeting on 9 May 2023.

## **5. Athletes' Anti-Doping Ombuds**

In November 2021, WADA's Executive Committee endorsed a one-year pilot project proposal for an Ombuds Program, which was conceived and proposed by WADA's Athlete Committee. In February 2022, WADA launched the recruitment process for the role, which attracted more than 140 applications.

The Ombuds will provide athletes cost-free, neutral, impartial, fair advice and assistance in relation to the World Anti-Doping Program and the entities that play a role within it.

The Ombuds will operate on the principles of independence, impartiality, confidentiality and informality.

The newly hired Ombuds, Anna Thorstenson was introduced to the Athlete Council where she discussed the role and took questions. Ms. Thorstenson will dedicate part of her time to carry out the one-year pilot project of the Ombuds Program. The Ombuds will work independently of WADA; will report to WADA's Executive Committee on progress, trends and issues of interest; and also, maintain regular contact with WADA's Athlete Council on issues of mutual interest.

Members were happy to hear the service was launched in Europe, but would be available worldwide. The hope is to create guidelines so that other organizations and countries set-up an Ombuds program, realizing that many athletes will choose to go local first.

The plan for communicating the program is underway and the Council was pleased to support the program realizing how important it is to the athlete community.

## **6. Human Rights Impact Assessment**

The Council had the opportunity to meet newly appointed Human Rights expert Snežana Samardžić-Marković as it relates to the impact of Human Rights within anti-doping. The Initial Human Rights Impact Assessment (IHRIA) will evaluate the intersection between the World Anti-Doping Program and the human rights of athletes.

The IHRIA was first proposed by WADA's Athlete Committee in 2021 with the objective of ensuring that WADA respects and protects the universally recognized human rights of athletes as it leads a global collaborative mission for doping-free sport.

While a human rights approach has always been central to WADA's work—particularly as it relates to the World Anti-Doping Code (Code) revision process—the Agency wants to be a leader in this space.

To this point, WADA's approach to evaluating human rights within the context of the Code has been legal in nature. With the IHRIA, WADA is recognizing that as important as legal assessments and precedents are, there are other aspects of evaluating human rights in an anti-doping context that must be taken into consideration.

Snežana will work closely with the Athlete Council as she leads the internal and external consultations with WADA staff and external stakeholders.

The IHRIA will consider the perceptions of athletes and other stakeholders to improve practice and inform and educate on how WADA and the Global Anti-Doping System address concerns and take concrete actions to protect athlete rights.

## **7. Play True Day and Communication Campaigns**

While Play True Day started as a small Latin American initiative, WADA's digital campaign now reaches millions of people each year, with numerous individuals and organizations taking part from around the globe. The next Play True Day will take place on Friday 14 April 2023.

The AC was introduced to Play True Day by Catherine MacLean, WADA's Communications Director, and was encouraged to take part.

## **8. Next meeting**

The Athlete Council has another in-person meeting in 2023 and it is tentatively scheduled for 15 November in Montreal, Canada.