

**SPEECH BY WADA PRESIDENT WITOLD BAŃKA TO THE MINISTERS  
OF SPORT AND SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS OF THE EAST,  
SOUTH AND SOUTH-EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES**

**7 JULY 2021**

Honorable Ministers and representatives of Governments from the East, South, and South-East Asia, WADA Executive and Foundation Board Members, ladies and gentlemen. Hello dear colleagues, greetings from Warsaw, Poland. As President of the World Anti-Doping Agency and a former Minister for Sport in the Polish Government, it is my honor to have the opportunity to address you today. I am pleased to say that I am joined at this meeting by WADA's Vice-President Yang Yang, Director General Olivier Niggli, Director of our Asia and Oceania Office Kazuhiro Hayashi, and Senior Director for Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships René Bouchard. We are all here to support you and collaborate with you in your anti-doping efforts.

Unfortunately, given the world we live in, we are not able to meet in person as has been the tradition for this meeting since 2004. However, there is light at the end of the tunnel and we hope to be with you face-to-face again soon.



Indeed, I will be in Tokyo later this month to represent WADA at the 138<sup>th</sup> International Olympic Committee Session and other activities associated with the Olympic Games that get underway on 23 July. It will be a pleasure for me to return to the Asia region – in particular for such exciting events.

It is a privilege for me as a former Sports Minister and as a former athlete at the international level, to head WADA as it fulfils its mission to lead a collaborative worldwide movement for doping-free sport. Since WADA was formed in 1999, great strides have been taken in the pursuit of clean sport. It has been over two decades of progress, cooperation and hard work on behalf of the athletes of the world.

Probably the most important of WADA's achievements has been the development and implementation of the World Anti-Doping Code first launched in 2004 and revised three times since. This document harmonizes anti-doping policies, rules and regulations across all sports and all countries around the globe. The Code is at the heart of the global anti-doping program. In conjunction with eight International Standards, it provides clarity and unity

where once there was uncertainty and disagreement. These Standards cover the areas of:

1. The Prohibited List;
2. Testing and Investigations;
3. Laboratories;
4. Therapeutic Use Exemptions;
5. Protection of Privacy and Personal Information;
6. Code Compliance by Signatories;
7. Education; and
8. Results Management.

Overall, the harmonization of this wide range of activities has been a remarkable success. Think about it. There are not many aspects of modern life, if any, that have achieved the level of international acceptance of very detailed rules and the cooperation that it requires as in sports anti-doping. The end result is that we have a system that works – and generally works well.

In parallel, the UNESCO Convention Against Doping in Sport provides public authorities with a legal framework. Through this, your governments can address specific areas of doping that are outside the domain of the sports movement. The Convention is now ratified by 191 countries, covering more than 99% of the world's population. I would like to congratulate you and say that almost all Asian countries' NADOs are in line with the World Anti-Doping Code and almost all Governments have ratified the UNESCO Convention.

Despite the clear improvements that have been made in the past 20 years, we are not so naïve as to think that WADA – or the anti-doping system in general – is perfect. There is always room for improvement. In July 2020, WADA published its Five-Year Strategic Plan under the theme 'Leading Anti-Doping in a New Era'. The Plan lays the foundation for WADA's strategic activity for 2020-2024 focusing on six strategic priorities around leadership, growing impact, putting athletes at the center, collaboration and unity, visibility and high performance.

To maintain a path of progress, it requires the right planning and strong leadership. To that end, like any organization, we consider it to be vitally important that we keep reviewing our governance model to make sure it remains fit for purpose. The vast majority of 70 reforms approved by WADA's Board at the end of 2018 have been fully implemented with the remainder having been well progressed. Overall, the reforms are ensuring that there are more independent voices, more athletes and more National Anti-Doping Organizations involved in decision-making. Olivier will elaborate on the Strategic Plan and Governance in his remarks.

It's important to recall that WADA was set up as a collaboration between partners. That collegial spirit endures. It is my belief that the only way to meet the challenges we face is by working together. We must make the most of our diverse strengths with the common goal of providing athletes with a level playing field on which they can compete fairly. Government Ministers and officials, sports administrators, lab workers, scientists, investigators, anti-doping and legal experts, educators, and athletes – we all have a part to play. WADA's role is not simply to be the global regulator, monitoring the

program and stepping in when things go wrong. We are here to assist, to help, to advise, to find solutions and to help implement them. That's what collaboration between partners means to me.

Referring back to the challenges that I mentioned previously, let me highlight just some of the main ones we are facing together:

- 1- COVID-19 and its impact on the upcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo.
- 2- Ensuring that Anti-Doping Organizations around the world are strong.
- 3- Funding for anti-doping.
- 4- Athlete empowerment.

## **COVID AND THE OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES**

As it relates to COVID-19, this past year or so has been extremely difficult for everyone. Nowhere and no one has avoided the impact of COVID-19, including the sports community. Since the start of the pandemic, WADA's number-one priority has been public safety, including that of athletes, doping control officers and everyone involved in the system.

With the leadership of WADA, the anti-doping community is getting through this pandemic and is making sure the system returns to full power as quickly and safely as possible. Since March 2020, WADA has been providing detailed guidance and support for Anti-Doping Organizations and athletes, which it has been updating as the situation has evolved, so that testing could continue where possible, in a safe and effective way.

On that, I am happy to say that testing is more or less back to normal levels. In fact, when it comes to out-of-competition testing, there were 2,500 more such tests carried out in May 2021 than in the same month in 2019. This is a tribute to the hard work, dedication and ingenuity of Anti-Doping Organizations, and WADA wishes to commend them and athletes for the commitment and flexibility they have shown during the pandemic.

With an eye on the upcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo – now only 16 days away – WADA has been supporting the work of the International Olympic Committee and the International Testing Agency in a

number of specific ways to help maintain the integrity of the Games. In particular, WADA has assisted the work of the pre-Games Taskforce, which is ensuring that all athletes headed for Tokyo have been subject to an adequate amount of testing. We are also working hard to ensure that the WADA-accredited laboratory in Tokyo is ready for the challenge of the Games. I would also like to remind NADOs – and all Anti-Doping Organizations – that the IOC-funded pre-Olympic long-term storage program delivered by the International Testing Agency is available to them, at no cost, so they can securely put samples away in a long-term storage facility for possible further analysis in the months and years to come. As detection methods are constantly being improved and updated, retaining samples for up to 10 years means that those who have taken a prohibited substance cannot rest easy for a full decade after they have been tested. This is a powerful deterrent.

WADA will also carry out an Independent Observer (IO) programs during the Tokyo Games. Specifically, the IO teams, which will be composed of a mix of WADA and other Anti-Doping Organization experts – will observe all





aspects of the anti-doping programs being operated by the International Testing Agency for the Olympics (on behalf of the IOC), and by the IPC for the Paralympics. The teams will provide daily feedback as to possible improvements that could be made to the anti-doping program, and post-Games will issue reports that will formalize recommendations for the IOC, the IPC, the WADA-accredited laboratory in Tokyo, the organizing committees, and WADA. This is all designed to enhance athlete and public confidence in the anti-programs during the Games and those at future events.

With all this preparation, WADA is optimistic for the success of Tokyo 2020 as we seek to provide all athletes with the level playing field they deserve.

## **BUILDING CAPACITY IN NADOs AND RADOs**

Documents like the aforementioned World Anti-Doping Code and the related International Standards are vitally important, although we know full well that they are only as good as how well they are implemented. In the real world, success in this area depends on the various National and Regional Anti-



Doping Organizations (NADOs and RADOs) all over the world. While WADA's Program Development and NADO/RADO Relations Department does a great job in providing quality oversight, advice and support to the NADOs and RADOs, there is no substitute for the support they get at home from their respective public authorities. Ministers your support and leadership for a strong program in each of your countries is critical. The anti-doping environment is becoming increasingly complex and fast moving – the NADOs and RADOs need to have the capacity and resources to deliver on their mandate. The legitimacy of the anti-doping system and the athletes' perception of it are at stake.

## **FUNDING**

Another of my main priorities as President is to increase overall funding for WADA and anti-doping. Annually, WADA receives about USD 40 million, half of which is provided by the governments of the world, including yours, and the other half comes from sports. We are grateful for your continued support. However, this is a modest budget when you consider our mission and the revenues that sport generates. WADA's mission is to protect sport across

nearly 200 countries and in all sports. Each year, we are asked to take on more, whether that it is in the field of education, intelligence and investigations, scientific research, capacity-building or the various other types of work we do. WADA is financially stable and does very well on limited means. Clearly, however, we do not have the resources to meet all the expectations of our stakeholders. If WADA is to safeguard clean sport in a bold and comprehensive way, it must secure the additional support it needs.

On this note, I take this opportunity to thank the Governments of China and India which have recently made additional contributions totaling almost USD 2 million, which WADA will primarily dedicate to its scientific research, and intelligence and investigations activities. This additional contribution is part of an initiative announced in November 2019 by IOC President Thomas Bach aimed at further strengthening WADA's research and investigations activities. Under this initiative, additional contributions provided by Governments are matched by the International Olympic Committee. Therefore, this commitment from the region will yield almost USD 4 million extra for WADA and the global anti-doping system. It will contribute greatly



to WADA's efforts to level the playing field for athletes worldwide for which we are grateful.

But it should not be up to Governments and the IOC to shoulder the financial burden of anti-doping alone. This is why in the weeks to come WADA will be actively seeking support from the private sector to help address some of the inequalities that exist in the world in terms of anti-doping.

We will increase our effort to entice private companies to help support clean sport. We will be serious, systematic and consistent in our approach to involve the private sector in support of WADA and clean sport. More than at any other time in the history of the Agency.

I believe that most companies should be interested in supporting clean sport as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility. Many sponsors and

private companies spend their money on sport – so we believe they should be motivated to contribute to clean sport?

With the increased funding, we would improve testing, research, and educational activities as well as anti-doping build capacity in the countries where it is most needed.

## **EMPOWERING ATHLETES**

As it relates to athletes, the empowerment of athletes is something very close to my heart. As a former elite athlete, I understand the importance of listening to the views of athletes worldwide. So far, I have met with hundreds of athletes and their representatives and this engagement will continue throughout my presidency. Indeed, this approach is also part of WADA's overall commitment to being more athlete-centered, as outlined in the Strategic Plan. In fact, we are seeing good progress in amplifying the athletes' voices. Thanks to recent governance reforms, athletes now have a presence on each of WADA's committees. One-third of both Foundation

Board and Executive Committee members are current or former athletes, bringing that perspective to the decision-making table and ensuring that WADA maintains an athlete focus in all that it does.

## **CONCLUSION**

In closing, dear colleagues, I want to thank you for your unwavering commitment to anti-doping. In collaboration with our Asia-Oceania Office, I particularly urge you to continue your support of your NADOs and RADOs, to give them the budget that they need and also to be strong ambassadors in your nations of our collective mission for doping-free sport. In that regard, I congratulate you for the work you are carrying out promoting regional cooperation and partnership. For example, the anti-doping seminars held within the Asian region – that hosted the NADOs from Japan, Korea and China – have already made a significant difference. Also, I know that each RADO of South Asia and South-East Asia has hosted regional anti-doping training for the capacity building of RADO member countries. This is very important and worthwhile work.



I would simply say that WADA's Strategic Plan places athletes at the center and is shaping the transformational journey that WADA has embarked on. Day in, day out, WADA will continue to collaborate with athletes and all our partners worldwide to strengthen the World Anti-Doping Program. We are committed to building anti-doping capacity and community, and to securing the additional funding that is required to further enable doping-free sport. We are confident that with the support of all our clean sport partners, including the governments of this region, we will succeed.

Thank you once again for sharing your time today with us. My WADA colleagues and I are happy to answer any questions you might have. But first I would like to call on the Vice-President of WADA and Olympic gold medalist in short-track speed skating, Yang Yang, who is joining us today from China.

Thank you.