

**WADA's 16<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM**  
**11-12 June 2022, SwissTech Convention Centre**  
**Lausanne, Switzerland**  
**Keynote address by WADA President, Witold Bańka**

**Title: "Raising the Game"**

Distinguished guests, dear friends from the anti-doping community, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to WADA's 16th Annual Symposium in Lausanne. Thank you all for attending – whether in person or virtually.

This is our first in-person Annual Symposium since 2019. In fact, it is my first as WADA President which means that we have not met in person during the past three years. One of the few good things to come out of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the advancement and accessibility of video conferencing technology. For the first time, the WADA Symposium is being delivered in a hybrid format with many of the sessions available via a virtual platform. During these two days, we will have about 600 delegates here in person with another 200 or so joining us remotely. The new technology is most welcome. But there is no substitute for in-person interactions.

So, it is exciting to see such a big turnout here, and I look forward to seeing all those joining us remotely today in person on a future occasion.

We have a fascinating and varied agenda with 25 different sessions. All under the Conference theme of 'Raising the Game'.

Today, we will hear about WADA's governance reform, which we first initiated in 2016 and will have far-reaching and meaningful impact on how the Agency is governed and how the Agency is perceived. We will hear about how the anti-doping system supports athletes, and about WADA's 'Operation LIMS' investigation regarding Russia – the biggest and most complex investigation in anti-doping history. There will also be a session on the implementation of dried blood spot analysis, an exciting addition to the range of testing methods.

Tomorrow, we will touch on topics such as education, ADAMS, the need for greater accountability and action by governments, how we are integrating athlete voices into the decision-making process, more on intelligence and investigations, and many other interesting topics.

Another highlight will be the athlete session on Monday. Under the leadership of WADA's Athlete Committee, this session is exclusively for athletes and athlete representatives. It will provide an overview of the opportunities and challenges presented to athletes within the anti-doping system. It will discuss WADA's recent reforms, including the exciting new Athlete Council, as well as the pilot project on the Athletes' Anti-doping Ombuds. It will be an opportunity for athletes to discuss and learn more about anti-doping. How the anti-doping community supports them... and how they can get further involved in shaping the future of anti-doping for the good of athletes everywhere.

As I said, the theme of this year's Symposium is 'Raising the Game'. So how is WADA doing so?

Well, frankly, I will not have time to go through every initiative and joint project that we are engaged in – some of which will be highlighted during these two days. WADA has a staff of around 150 dedicated and talented people, based at our headquarters in Montreal and across our four regional offices as well as our presidential office.



They work in daily collaboration with hundreds of you in various organizations, raising the game for athletes and clean sport.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you very much for what you do for clean sport. Your expertise and hard work are not only necessary, they are crucial. Your commitment is priceless. Anti-doping is a team sport and WADA is nothing without you.

Even COVID could not end these partnerships. The pandemic led to the cancelation of hundreds of sporting events – including the WADA Symposium! But while it was disruptive for the global anti-doping system, it also showed the resilience of this community. I am proud to say that WADA and the global anti-doping community have continued to work closely together to respond to the challenges that COVID-19 has presented.

Since day one, the response of Anti-Doping Organizations has been quick and effective. Good communication has been key. At every stage, WADA has provided guidance for all stakeholders, including athletes.

Overall, out-of-competition testing numbers were maintained at normal levels throughout 2021 and 2022. And crucially, out-of-competition testing in 2022 is actually at a level significantly greater than before the pandemic. This is very encouraging and, it is a credit to Anti-Doping Organizations everywhere.

As it relates to WADA governance, the wide-ranging process of reform has yielded significant results over the past three to four years. With these reforms, we are seeing a significant swing towards enhanced independence and representation for athletes. WADA's Director General, Olivier Niggli, will go into more detail during his presentation shortly. It is fair to say that with this new structure, WADA is raising the game. Athletes are very much at the center of everything we do. They will be part of major decisions that we make.

More and more, education is a core component of anti-doping work. The International Standard for Education sets out the requirements that Code Signatories have to meet. Through WADA's Anti-Doping Education and Learning platform, known as ADEL, we provide education and learning opportunities for the anti-doping community worldwide, including: athletes,

coaches, parents, medical professionals and more. In addition, WADA leads educational initiatives that support the capability development of anti-doping practitioners. The fact is that the fight against doping cannot be won through deterrence or testing alone. In the long run, education has the best chance of instilling the right culture within sport. Speaking of education, WADA will host the 2022 Global Education Conference in Sydney, Australia, in September. I will attend and I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Compliance is another aspect of our work that has been significantly strengthened. With the work of WADA's Compliance Taskforce, the independent Compliance Review Committee and the Executive Committee, all Signatories to the World Anti-Doping Code are supported in their efforts to remain Code compliant. All this within the clear, transparent and fair framework of the ISO-certified Code Compliance Monitoring Program, and under the rules outlined in the International Standard for Code Compliance by Signatories.

Meanwhile, Intelligence and Investigations are playing a growing role in protecting clean sport. Our investigators work behind the scenes and often in collaboration with law enforcement or other Anti-Doping Organizations. They gather information from whistleblowers and other sources, often through WADA's confidential platform, 'Speak Up!'. And then they conduct rigorous investigations into what they are told. They leave no stone unturned to uncover wrongdoing when and where it happens. In the past year alone, WADA's investigators have concluded and reported on five important investigations, the results of which can all be found on the WADA website. Several more are ongoing. And investigators in other organizations continue to make a real difference as well.

Another area where the anti-doping community is making real progress is in innovation. The implementation of the dried blood spot analysis on a routine basis during this year's Olympic and Paralympic Games in Beijing was a great collaborative achievement. With many potential advantages over other forms of testing, dried blood spot could be a significant step forward and, at the very least, will be an important complement to traditional blood and urine tests.

We are also actively researching ways for artificial intelligence to help the fight against doping. By processing and interpreting vast amounts of data, we will be able to identify suspicious patterns. From that, we will be able to adjust testing programs to make them more targeted and effective. Artificial intelligence research is gathering pace and will hopefully lead to some exciting outcomes in the years to come.

What this shows is the real-world benefits that come with effective scientific research. Unfortunately, in recent years, WADA's research budget fell from a high of USD 6.6 million in 2006 to USD 1.9 million by 2017. This poses a clear risk to the global anti-doping system. Recognizing that, last month, we proposed that WADA's global budget of USD 46 million should be increased. I am happy to say that last month, we received the unanimous support of our Foundation Board members. They approved increases to WADA's budget of 8%, 6% and 6% for the next three years. This will allow us to invest a minimum of USD 4.5 million annually in research.



WADA is funded equally by sports and governments. But we want to ensure they do not shoulder the burden alone. So, we are actively pursuing private contributions from other sources. In fact, we recently announced an exciting sponsorship deal with SuperSport, the African broadcaster. We are grateful for the vision being shown by our friends at SuperSport. They recognize the value that comes with associating their brand with clean sport. We are confident that this is just the start. We intend it to be the first of many such agreements. We want more resources to be invested. Not just in WADA, but in the anti-doping system globally.

Ladies and gentlemen, the world is in a precarious situation. Not too far from where we gather this morning, a war is being fought. I want to reiterate here that WADA condemns the aggression by Russia and stands in solidarity with the Ukrainian people and Ukrainian athletes.

Speaking of Russia, as you know, most Russian athletes are suspended internationally at the moment. But it is important that we keep an open line of communication with the Russian Anti-Doping Agency to discuss operational matters and to monitor its activities. We want to ensure that the war does not give a free pass to cheats. We also must continue to monitor

RUSADA in light of the non-compliance ruling issued by the Court of Arbitration for Sport in December 2020.

Meanwhile, many Ukrainian athletes are still training and competing internationally. It is important that we continue to support them and include them in the anti-doping process. WADA recently asked 19 National Anti-Doping Organizations, in countries where elite Ukrainian athletes are now living, to include them in their testing plans. We asked them to fund sample collection and analysis as a gesture of support, and to ensure the overall integrity of the system. I knew they would rise to that challenge and I am very happy to say I was right. Of the 19 NADOs we reached out to, every single one responded positively. In addition, International Federations have also agreed to test Ukrainian athletes in line with their testing plans. I am proud of the response to our appeal and I thank all that responded.

The war in Ukraine is a tragedy. But it has brought out the best in the global anti-doping community. Great solidarity is being shown. At this time, we must all stand united with athletes and clean sport colleagues from Ukraine.

Anti-doping is all about collaboration. Solidarity. Unity. Partnership. Without the commitment and dedication of every stakeholder group, our anti-doping community simply cannot achieve its mission. Every day, we all work tirelessly to protect the integrity of sport worldwide. For me, sport can represent everything that is pure and good. Perhaps it is the only thing left in this world that is capable of building communities, promoting tolerance and fostering respect. Respect for team-mates, for opponents, for ourselves – everyone. In this way, maybe sport is the best teacher for the youth of the world – but only clean sport. It is up to us – all of us – to do everything we can to protect it.

Looking ahead, we have so many exciting opportunities and challenges that we will face. How do we further harmonize the system in an imperfect world? How are we going to ensure everyone within anti-doping is held accountable for their performance, just as the athletes are? How are we going to push forward with innovation, with education, and with research to further protect clean sport?

We all have a role to play in responding to these questions and others.

Since the start of my presidency at the beginning of 2020, I have engaged in hundreds of online and in-person meetings. I have witnessed the incredible level of passion and commitment for anti-doping among athletes, sports, governments, National Anti-Doping Organizations, laboratories, members of the media, service providers, researchers and the public. The collective will is there. It is strong.

Taking that passion with us, we can all lead by example, taking bold steps to tackle the issues with agility and innovation. We can expand the reach and impact of anti-doping programs by enhancing capacity-building and knowledge-sharing across the world. We can engage and collaborate with each other to increase support, unity and understanding. We can raise awareness and shape a clear message that clean sport is the only sport we will accept and celebrate. And all the time we must engage and empower athletes so their anti-doping journey is easier, so they are part of the decision-making process, and so they can build healthy and sustainable careers in sport. This is how they will inspire the next generation of athletes to do the same.

On this note...I would like to share a short video with you that reveals our new athlete-focused Play True campaign, which celebrates athletes and, in particular, the family, coaches and others who instilled in them the values of clean sport.

### **Play video**

I hope you like what you have seen. As mentioned, this is just the beginning. This weekend, you will see elements of the campaign at our outreach booth outside these doors; and, over the coming months, you will see it come to life through digital channels, via our outreach activities at major events and through other means. So, please, stay tuned, as we will be engaging you all as well as members of the anti-doping community.

In the meantime, enjoy this year's Symposium among colleagues. Ask questions, collaborate, build relationships and share with others the benefit of your own expertise so we can each do our bit to raise the game. Thank you for attending. I look forward to talking to many of you this weekend.

Let's raise the game... together!

Thank you.