



## **Speech WADA President, Witold Bańka 7th ASEAN Meeting of Ministers on Sports**

**31 August 2023: Chiang Mai, Thailand**

Dear Mr. Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn, Minister of Tourism and Sports in the Government of Thailand; honorable Sports Ministers from across the South-East Asia region; other Government and NADO representatives; distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I wish to thank you for the opportunity to be here today. In particular, I thank the ASEAN Secretariat for inviting me to speak on behalf of WADA... and the Government of Thailand for organizing this forum. This is the first time we have been invited to present in an ASEAN meeting. As many of you will know, in March 2022, WADA and ASEAN signed a memorandum of understanding to work more closely together. Now, a comprehensive and innovative action plan has been prepared and agreed, for the five years from 2023 to 2027. This will enable us to implement the MoU in a



clear and organized way. It is another real step forward for WADA's relationship with ASEAN and, by extension, for anti-doping in Asia.

This region is extremely important to us. Sport plays an enormous role in everyday life and culture in Asia. Increasingly, this is becoming the center of the sporting world. The three most recent Olympic and Paralympic Games have been successfully staged in this region.

We are also impressed at some of the anti-doping activities being conducted by Governments and NADOs in your countries at this time. This includes the Asia Education Symposium, held in July in Singapore, and the ASEAN Doping Control Officers Symposium which took place in Malaysia last week. I am satisfied with the recent anti-doping program development in ASEAN Member States, which has been accelerated by our MoU with you. I also wish the best of luck to ASEAN athletes as they prepare to compete in the upcoming Asian Games in China. And also the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games in November, here in Thailand.



From our perspective, we will hold our Executive Committee meeting in Shanghai, China, next month. It is also a pleasure to be able to plan towards the 2025 World Conference on Doping in Sport, which for the first time will take place in Asia. The city of Busan, South Korea, will be the scene for this important clean sport gathering.

As well as the ASEAN members, it is also good to see representatives from the governments of China and Japan here. The cooperation between ASEAN Member States and China and Japan is greatly appreciated. It is an example of how effective collaboration is building capacity and improving the anti-doping system all over the Asia region.

This forum today is an opportunity for all of us to exchange and to share ideas. Increasingly, many of you have engaged in sport or anti-doping activities and implemented practices that have proven to be very successful. Through collaboration and information-sharing, perhaps those same initiatives can be replicated elsewhere or implemented on a wider scale. Together we can meet any challenges faced in the region. By pooling resources and ideas, we can achieve anything.



As far as WADA is concerned, some of you may not be familiar with our work. Put simply, WADA is the global governing body for anti-doping in sport... all sports in all countries. We are a unique collaboration between the Sport Movement and Governments of world. That 50-50 structure is reflected in our governance and how we are funded. In January, I embarked on my second term as WADA President. Working closely with Vice-President Yang Yang from China, our first term was busy. It was challenging but I believe it was successful. WADA is unquestionably a more modern, independent and athlete-focused organization than at any time since its establishment in 1999. This is due in large part to our 2020-2024 Strategic Plan that places athletes at the center. It is also due to major governance reforms that were initiated in 2016 and will be fully implemented this year. These reforms are delivering a shift towards more representation for athletes and National Anti-Doping Organizations, and greater independence with the addition of more independent experts.

I already mentioned the 2025 World Conference, which will be held in Korea. At that meeting, the latest version of the World Anti-Doping Code and related International Standards will be adopted. This will be an



important step forward as these documents are the legislative framework for the anti-doping community. The process towards that starts next month with the all-important stakeholder consultation phase. I hope that you all contribute to that process. Please let us know how you think the Code can be further strengthened for the good of athletes and clean sport.

Speaking of the Code and the legislative framework, I know that one of the biggest challenges that you, the ASEAN countries, are facing right now is their adoption within your legal systems. This will ensure that the rules and legislation in your respective countries are compliant with the Code. In order for anti-doping to run smoothly, it is extremely important that you have that strong legal framework to serve as a basis for a robust clean sport program.

I understand this can be complicated. It can be difficult to achieve quickly. But without it, it becomes very difficult for all of us to provide a harmonized, consistent and level playing field around the world for all athletes to enjoy, including yours. Please know that you are not alone. WADA can help you every step of the way. Our experts in law and compliance are available to advise you and to make the process as painless as possible. We must all come together on this. Every ASEAN member state needs to be prepared



to implement the revised Code and Standards when they come into force in 2027.

In recent months, I have been stressing the need to strengthen the UNESCO Convention Against Doping in Sport. It is WADA's clear position that the roles and responsibilities of governments should be better clarified and monitored, whether that is through the Convention or through other complementary mechanisms.

Related to that is WADA's funding model – there has been a lot of talk in the past year about plans by UNESCO to force a decision on WADA's regional funding split at the next Conference of Parties, which will be held in October 2023. I am concerned about this. If this is allowed to progress, it could have serious long-term consequences for your Governments in South-East Asia as well as for WADA's financial security and capacity as a whole. We, at WADA, have reached out to UNESCO to find a way through this very important issue. So far, there is no solution in sight. Discussions are on-going. Our position is that the way WADA is funded, by whom it is funded and how much each country should pay is not for UNESCO to decide. We believe there are other solutions and that is why we are in discussion with UNESCO. But UNESCO may also need to hear the



concerns directly from Governments and for that, we would value your support.

As we look forward, we at WADA continue to action our Strategic Plan.

Specifically, our priorities include:

- Preventing doping through education;
- Investing more in scientific research;
- Monitoring Code compliance robustly and fairly;
- Encouraging the Governments of the world to invest in building stronger anti-doping programs;
- Developing fruitful partnerships and proactively seeking additional funding to close gaps within the anti-doping system; and
- Building intelligence and investigations capacity around the world .

Speaking of investigations, over the past year or so, we have been bringing together anti-doping experts from NADOs and law enforcement agencies (including customs) in Europe to build relationships, identify synergies and work together in the fight against doping on a daily basis. This pilot project is co-funded by the European Commission and is proving to be very successful. In fact, it is better than even our most optimistic expectations.



Due to this initiative, NADOs are working with law enforcement and WADA. Together we have already dismantled several illicit steroid laboratories. We have seized significant amounts of performance enhancing drugs and numerous athletes have been caught doping. It is an excellent example of what can be achieved if we all work together.

Due to this success, the WADA Intelligence and Investigations Department has decided to expand this project worldwide and establish a Global Anti-Doping Intelligence and Investigations Network. We will do this region by region and the next phase of the project will be Asia/Oceania, which will start in 2025.

We believe it is a great opportunity to increase I&I capacities here, strengthen our relationships with law enforcement, and make a significant impact in the protection of clean sport just as we are doing in Europe.

WADA I&I will train, support and guide you during the project but you need to be prepared by having enough I&I resources available, both from the NADOs and from your law enforcement agencies. Please contact our I&I Department to find out how you can be involved in this exciting initiative and perhaps even offer additional resources from your side.





Finally, in closing, as we consider the anti-doping system, we must always remember to engage and empower athletes. We must make their anti-doping journey easier. From our side, I am happy to report that we have made great progress in how we engage with athletes and with increasing their role in the decision-making processes. A new 20-member Athlete Council has been established to represent, support, and promote the voices of athletes on anti-doping matters.

It is all about collaboration. I really believe in the communication and engagement we have developed with important clean sport stakeholders, including the Governments of South-East Asia. It is working.

Thank you once again for the warm welcome I have received here. I urge you all to make the most of the time we have together. Please enjoy the meeting, participate actively and give us the benefit of your experience in the area of anti-doping and the broader sporting world. Thank you.