

# 141<sup>st</sup> International Olympic Committee Session, 15 October 2023, Mumbai, India

## Speech by WADA President, Witold Bańka

Dear IOC President Dr. Thomas Bach, IOC Vice-Presidents, IOC Executive Board Members, IOC Members, Presidents of National Olympic Committees and International Federations, ladies and gentlemen. It is great to be able to gather with you here in Mumbai on the occasion of the 141st IOC Session. It is my pleasure to be able once again to provide you with an update on WADA's latest activities. I thank you for this opportunity.

WADA and the global anti-doping community have been working together to maintain the integrity of the system as the sporting world prepares for next year's Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris. In the build-up to the Games, WADA urges all Anti-Doping Organizations to make the most of the remaining time to ensure that athletes are tested to the appropriate level. Please make sure to implement the testing recommendations that you will receive from the Pre-Games Expert Group being led by the International Testing Agency. Ahead of the Games, we will work hard with the ITA and other key stakeholders, including the WADA-accredited laboratory in Paris, to ensure everyone is ready for the challenge that awaits.

Part of that preparation lies in the education of athletes and their entourage. In this area, WADA has led the way in collaboration with the IOC, ITA and the International Paralympic Committee. Earlier this month, we launched a new education course for athletes and coaches bound for Paris 2024 Games. There has already been considerable interest in the course. Please encourage your athlete and coach stakeholders to complete the course and familiarize themselves with what they can expect from anti-doping at the Games.

It has been a busy time for WADA's independent Intelligence and Investigations Department. In the past year or so, we have reported on the conclusion of several successful investigations. I do not propose to go over the detail of those investigations. All the reports are available on WADA's website.

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. This pilot project is co-funded by the European Union and is proving to be very successful. In fact, it is better than even our most optimistic expectations. Due to this initiative, NADOs have been working with law enforcement and WADA on no fewer than 21 investigations. As a direct result, together we have already smashed several illicit steroid laboratories. We have seized significant amounts of performance enhancing drugs and many arrests have been made by police. It is an excellent example of what can be achieved if we all work together.

Due to this success, WADA I&I 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 here in Asia, which will start in 2025. We have just received confirmation that INTERPOL wants to partner with us on this expansion into Asia and beyond.

As regards Russia, the status of the Russian Anti-Doping Agency remains unchanged. It will remain that way until it fulfills each of the reinstatement conditions in full as laid out by the Court of Arbitration for Sport in its decision of December 2020, and until we have been able to verify that. We will continue to follow the agreed process. However, on top of it, further non-conformities have been identified, to do with Russian law not being in line with the World Anti-Doping Code. Our ExCo's decision to impose fresh consequences has been disputed by RUSADA. So, now WADA will refer the matter to CAS for its consideration.

Meanwhile, our Operation LIMS investigation into the data and samples retrieved by WADA I&I from the Moscow Anti-Doping Laboratory in 2019 continues to be successful. As of today, 222 convictions have been obtained with an additional 58 charged and 145 cases that remain under investigation. I would like to thank all the International Federations involved, as well as the International Testing Agency. Together, we are delivering a great result for clean sport.

Like WADA's investigators, it has also been a busy time for compliance monitoring as Anti-Doping Organizations work hard to ensure they apply the 2021 revised World Anti-Doping Code appropriately. In recent weeks, WADA has been dealing with a number of compliance cases. The details of those have all been announced and continue to be updated as situations change. It is worth noting that none of these cases have involved International Federations. It is encouraging to see the excellent progress being made by IFs and the ITA in this regard.

Compliance monitoring is a central pillar of WADA's mission and is at the heart of the athletes' expectations. It is crucial for the global program that all sports and all countries follow the same set of rules and implement compliant anti-doping programs. This harmonization means that athletes know what to expect from the anti-doping system, no matter where they are from or where they are competing and that they get the comfort of knowing that their competitors are also under a robust program all year long.

WADA will continue to make every effort to ensure Anti-Doping Organizations solve their issues before any declaration of non-compliance. Non-compliance is and will remain the last resort in our tool of actions. We will continue to help those who have been declared non-compliant to return to good standing as quickly as possible.

A significant achievement for WADA has been continued progress as it relates to governance reform. Since November 2016, WADA has undergone two rounds of reforms, following broad consultation with all stakeholders. Most of the reforms have now been implemented, delivering a shift towards more representation for athletes and NADOs within the organization. It is worth mentioning the creation of a 20-member Athlete Council, composed of and chosen by athletes, with one seat on the Executive Committee, two seats on the Foundation Board and members on various other WADA committees. Our Athlete Council looks forward to collaborating closely with all Athlete Committees of the world, in particular that of the IOC.

In May of this year, the WADA Executive Committee endorsed an approach, timetable and drafting teams for a limited update of the World Anti-Doping Code and related International Standards. The process kicked off last month with a stakeholder engagement phase. It will culminate in November 2025 with the updated documents being approved during WADA's sixth World Conference on Doping in Sport in Busan, South Korea. The revised documents would enter into force on 1 January 2027.

We believe the current World Anti-Doping Program is working well. We also know there is an opportunity for some limited improvements. As living, breathing documents, that are owned by the entire global anti-doping community, it is important that we continually consult and explore ways to strengthen the system together for athletes worldwide. We greatly encourage you to participate in the various upcoming phases of consultation.

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 of everything we do.

We continue to action that Plan. Within six strategic priorities, we are carefully measuring our progress against specific key performance indicators through external consultation. Last year, we issued our first Annual Perception Survey for athletes and other stakeholders that established a base line for subsequent years. This survey showed some very positive trends. More than 80% of stakeholders perceive WADA as the leader in the anti-doping field and more than three-quarters of athletes believe WADA cares about their welfare. In addition, two-thirds of athletes believe WADA is fair and equitable. Of course, there is always room for improvement, and we continue to build on these encouraging results.

WADA continues to be in a healthy financial position. It's important to note that our budget of just over USD 50 million largely comes from the Sport Movement and Governments of the world. We are grateful for this continued support. And we work hard to maximize the impact of every dollar we spend.

In addition, we believe the Sport Movement and Governments cannot be expected to shoulder the financial responsibility alone. I made a promise in my manifesto when I was running for President. I said we would actively pursue private funding from other sources. In 2022, we announced a regional sponsorship deal, with South African broadcaster, SuperSport. And just last month we signed a very exciting five-year partnership agreement with global technology firm Sword Group, as our first ever global partner. This agreement with Sword is a historic moment for WADA. It is a direct result of our commitment to bring in private funding to complement the annual budget. And it is not the end. We are confident that we will succeed in attracting other organizations willing to invest in the integrity of sport. It will strengthen our ability to ensure a harmonized, coordinated and effective anti-doping system for athletes.

With this increased financial security, and with your continued backing, I am looking forward to the next few years of my presidency with optimism and renewed energy. During that time, I intend to focus my efforts with Vice-President Yang Yang and WADA Management on the following areas:

- Further engaging and empowering athletes;
- Preventing intentional or unintentional use of prohibited substances and methods 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; and
- Developing fruitful partnerships and promoting collaboration in all areas of anti-doping.

In closing, I want to stress that WADA and the global anti-doping system has grown stronger in recent years. In every way – financially, legally, scientifically, and crucially, in the confidence that athletes and other key stakeholders can have in the system. However, our main mission remains to protect the dreams of clean athletes. That will never change. And, with your support, we will achieve our mission. Collaboration is the key. Anti-doping is all about partnership. We are nothing without the commitment and dedication of you, the Sport Movement.

We at WADA look forward to your ongoing support. Together we will work with you all to further strengthen the global anti-doping system.

Thank you.