

Keynote address by WADA President, Witold Bańka 2023 JADA International Anti-Doping Seminar in Asia and Oceania

“Progress Through Collaboration and Leadership”

Tokyo, Japan: 12 December 2023

Mr. State Minister, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Mr. Aoyama Shuhei; Chair of Japan Anti-Doping Agency, Professor Akama Takao; Mr. Commissioner, Japan Sports Agency and WADA Executive Committee member, Dr. Murofushi Koji; distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

I am honored to be able to address you here today. As I mentioned this morning, I could only do it virtually last year. In fact, it is my first time doing so since I became WADA President. The last time I attended this seminar in person was as President-Elect at the end of 2019. It is great to see such a good turnout for this important anti-doping seminar. This level of support demonstrates a real leadership and commitment to clean sport here in Japan and around the Asia and Oceania regions.

I want to thank JADA for running this symposium. It is a great opportunity for us. We all have valuable but slightly different experiences of anti-doping so we can learn from one another. Above all, we must keep our focus on why we are involved in the clean sport community. It is to raise the game for athletes of the world. Whether our background is science, medicine, the law, investigations, compliance, politics or diplomacy, external relations or any other aspect of anti-doping, we all have something to contribute to and learn from this seminar. I thank the organizers here in Tokyo – WADA is proud to be involved.

This kind of forum helps to build a strong global anti-doping community. WADA is here to support. But no single body can do it on its own. It requires cooperation from all concerned. Collaboration is the key. That is why WADA was formed nearly a quarter of a century ago and that central philosophy has never changed. If we work together as one, we can achieve anything. And if we do not, we will falter.

WADA has always recognized the importance of partnerships in the pursuit of clean sport. JADA and the Government of Japan are key partners for us. Your influence within the Asia and Oceania regions makes you an important player within the global anti-doping landscape. Our ambitions to address doping in sport are also yours. It is our mutual objective to empower athletes and their support personnel. We must give them the tools they need to compete clean, and therefore Play True, throughout their careers.

I want to thank Japan for its ongoing support of WADA. This support has come in many ways, not least through the presence on our Foundation Board of Mr. Aoyama Shuhei. I thank him for his service and valuable contributions. On our Executive Committee, we benefit from the experience and knowledge of Dr. Koji Murofushi, an Olympic gold medalist in the sport of hammer throwing and Commissioner of the Japan Sports Agency. I want to point out also that Prof. Takao Akama, the Chair of JADA, sits on WADA's Health, Medical and Research Committee, actively contributing to the health of athletes globally. And, of course, Yaya Yamamoto is a valued and long-serving member of our Education Committee.

I am delighted that JADA's influence is continuing to be felt around this region and, indeed globally, as Ms. Chika Hirai holds a seat on WADA's NADO Expert Advisory Group. We thank her for her contributions to that forum.

But that is not all. I also acknowledge that Japan has been very supportive of National and Regional Anti-Doping Organization development over the years. Through an annual funding agreement with WADA, the Government of Japan has contributed more than USD 2 million to support the RADOs in Asia. JADA has a memorandum of understanding with the South-East Asia RADO whereby it helps in the development of that RADO's member countries. I know that JADA also helps with building capacity in the Indonesia NADO and assisting in its ongoing development. And of course, this seminar is an important annual event in the Asia and Oceania regions. JADA covers the costs of the attendance of many NADOs and RADOs at the meeting so they can benefit from it.

How Japan partnered with WADA for the successful Olympic and Paralympic Games here in Tokyo in 2021 was also appreciated, especially as regards the important work of our Independent Observer teams. Overall, then, Japan's influence and contributions at WADA are significant and I thank you for your dedication and hard work for the good of athletes and clean sport around the world.

My role as President of WADA is to lead the organization forward. To achieve our goals and stay ahead of those who would cheat the system, we must know what we do well while also being open to change. If we think we already have all the answers, we are finished. If we stand still, we will actually go backwards. Later today, WADA Director General Olivier Niggli will go through some of the details as to how WADA continues to forge ahead. He will outline how WADA is delivering on its mission to lead a global collaborative movement for doping-free sport and is raising the game for athletes of the world. As Olivier will mention, meaningful governance reforms are equipping WADA with the tools it needs to do just that. I am proud of the work carried out since 2016 to reform our governance model. As a result, we are seeing a significant swing towards more independence and enhanced representation for athletes and for NADOs such as JADA.

Another important area which will require creativity and a capacity to adapt is funding. To deliver on our mission, WADA must be adequately resourced. Our 2024 budget is just over USD 50 million. When you consider our mandate that includes all sports in all countries, it is not a huge amount. If we are to deliver on what we are being asked to do, we need more. However, in my opinion, it should not be up to governments and sports to take on this financial burden alone.

That is why during my campaign to become WADA President I made a promise. I pledged to seek new sources of funding and sponsorship agreements with private entities to boost our income. I am very pleased to say we are delivering on that promise. Later, Olivier will go into more detail as to how that is taking shape and the new partners we now have on board.

Additional funding will strengthen WADA's and the community's ability to deliver in important areas. For me, at the root of sport and, specifically, anti-doping, are the athletes. They must always remain our focus and our priority. Without athletes there is no sport. And without their support and trust, there can be no effective anti-doping program. So, the question we must constantly ask ourselves is how we can ensure our organization remains athlete-centered. How can we amplify their voices and boost their influence in such a way that further protects the integrity of sport. Today, I would like to mention some of the ways we can do that.

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 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.

I do not propose going into detail on those key strategies. But I did want to expand a little on the subject of investigations. There is an exciting new element of it that affects Asia specifically. Over the past year or so, we have been bringing together anti-doping experts from NADOs and law enforcement agencies (including customs) in Europe. Through this project, we are strengthening partnerships, educating the police on anti-doping matters and learning from them as we find ways to work together. This pilot project is proving to be very successful. Now, European 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 we have interrupted the operations of criminal gangs as they seek to provide the drugs that threaten the health of athletes and the integrity of sport. 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 here in Asia/Oceania. This will start in 2025.

We believe it is a great opportunity to increase I&I capacities here and make a significant impact in the protection of clean sport just as we are doing in Europe. WADA will train, support and guide you during the project but you need to be prepared by having enough intelligence and investigations resources available, both from the NADOs and from your law enforcement agencies. Please contact our I&I Department for more details and to get involved.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you can see, as the global anti-doping regulator, WADA is constantly evolving. The threats to sport and to the health of athletes are all around us. We must remain vigilant. But in the same space lie the opportunities. By confronting the challenges and meeting them head on, we discover new ways of working that are more efficient or more effective. This is how we move forward, and this is how we protect the dreams of clean athletes.

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.