

## WADA Athlete Council

3 December 2024

### Meeting Outcomes

*Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*

Athlete Council Members	Athlete Council Members
Ryan Pini, Chair	Gaby Ahrens, Vice-Chair
Ivan Cosic	Adriana Escobar
Inaki Gomez	Jennifer Harss
Dora Hegyi	Humphrey Kayange
Kristen Kit	Patrick O-Leary
Yuhan Tan	Maja Wloszczowska
Hong Zhang	
Apologies	
Clare Egan	Olumide Oyedeji
Ella Sabljak	Emma Terho
Alessia Zecchini	
WADA (some only for specific items)	
Witold Banka, President	Olivier Niggli, Director General
Karine Henrie, Head of Athlete Engagement	Stacy Spletzer-Jegen, Senior Manager, Athlete Engagement
Francisco Leon, Director, Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office	Tom May, Director, Engagement and Development
Rodney Swigelaar, Director, Africa Regional Office	Yaya Yamamoto, Director, Asia/Oceania Regional Office

WADA's [Athlete Council](#) (AC) held an in-person meeting on 3 December 2024 in Riyadh, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The key outcomes of the discussions are outlined below.

### Welcome and Chair Updates

- WADA AC Chair, Ryan Pini welcomed the members to their second in-person meeting of 2024. The agenda was sent out two weeks prior to the meeting and no additions or changes were provided by members.
- The Chair reminded members that the outcomes of the previous meeting, which took place virtually on 7 October, were circulated via email and were approved as complete and final. As such, they were published on WADA's [website](#).
- The Chair thanked all members that attended different engagement activities, Athlete Forums and meetings over the past months. The Chair also noted that he recently attended the IOC Athlete Commission meeting and also met separately with the IOC Entourage Commission.
- The IPC recently elected a new Chair of their Athlete Council and with that they put forward a new Paralympic Athlete to join Group 1 of the WADA AC. The new IPC AC member on the WADA AC is Ms. Yujiao Tan from Para Powerlifting (China). Due to the appointment taking place less than a week before this meeting, unfortunately she was unable to take part. We look forward to welcoming Yujiao.
- The Chair provided an update on several items regarding the Executive Committee agenda (i.e., meeting taking place the following day) and included a discussion with the group. Specifically, the Chair:
  - Reassured the group that, while some countries had not paid their contributions to WADA and WADA Management was asked to present a revised budget for 2025, activities around the Code, the Athlete Council and Athlete Engagement activities will not be impacted.
  - The final Cottier report was discussed, and the Chair updated the group on the Working Group's [final recommendations](#). As the Chair is part of the Working Group, an in-depth summary was provided to members.
- The Chair provided a brief update on the upcoming Group 2 election for the WADA AC and thanked all members who have been part of the AC over the past two years.

### WADA Standing Committee and Working Group Update: Member Updates

- Members of the WADA AC that sit on various Standing Committees and Working Groups provided updates:
  - Kristen Kit will be finishing her term on the Finance and Administration Committee and urged the Council to take up this work as a priority going forward. Kristen found that having the athlete voice included in WADA's financial strategy helps ensure WADA remains athlete centered.
  - Dora Hegyi provided an update on the Education Committee, including their work on the Global Clean Sport Education Agenda, ADEL for Youth posters, Unintentional Doping Taskforce Roadmap and the Behavior map.
  - Lastly, Patrick O'Leary provided a brief update on the Prevalence Working Group, a group he Chairs.

### Roundtable Discussion: Updates, Observations and Lessons learned

- AC members were provided an opportunity to provide updates and feedback on recent experiences in anti-doping.
- Members of Athlete Engagement teams and IO Missions in Paris 2024 provided their own insight, agreeing that having these experiences is helpful to members of the WADA AC in building capacity.
- The Athlete Council discussed the importance of the Independent Observer (IO) reports and their critical role in ensuring the integrity of anti-doping practices at major events. The Council agreed to take a proactive approach in

reviewing the outcomes and recommendations from these reports to ensure they are effectively followed up and implemented.

### **Current Affairs and Updates from WADA Leadership: President, Vice-President and Director General**

- The Chair welcomed and thanked the President, Vice-President and Director General to the meeting.
- The President thanked the AC for having them at their meeting once again and for all their work on different WADA Committees and their recent work in Paris 2024.
- The President, Vice-President and Director General provided an update to the AC on current affairs, namely:
  - addressing questions around the 'Cottier report', its recommendations and the work of the related Working Group, taking this opportunity to thank Ryan for his participation on the Working Group;
  - providing an update on the revised 2025 budget plans and the importance of governments fulfilling their financial obligations to ensure that WADA remains independent and can fulfill its mandate for all athletes; and;
  - explaining a discussion led by UNESCO and the Americas Council for Sport (CADE) in relation to the Code and national legislation monitoring
- The Chair then invited questions for the President, Vice-President and Director General and encouraged an open dialogue. On the three topics noted above, the Council expressed:
  - Its thanks to the Working Group responsible for reviewing the Cottier recommendations and noted that the roadmap summarized by the Chair earlier during the meeting provided a constructive way to learn from the 23 Chinese swimmers' case and to finally move forward.
  - The importance of all governments to fulfill their commitments and pay their annual contribution in order to continue to support athletes from around the world. The Council also noted how anti-doping seems to be becoming more and more politicized, which members thought must be avoided as it puts all athletes and the entire anti-doping system at risk.
  - The need to ensure a harmonized anti-doping system, even when a country decided to have some aspects of the Code implemented through national legislation and that WADA should ensure that the Code is implemented adequately so there are no loopholes and that all athletes are treated fairly.

### **AC Action Plan Update, Ryan Pini, Karine Henrie:**

- At their last virtual meeting, the AC finalized and endorsed its 2024 – 2025 Action Plan. The Chair provided a progress update on each of the 4 main goals and the related sub-activities, highlighting achievements thus far, next steps to consider for 2025 and inviting members to confirm their interest to support some of the upcoming 2025 initiatives. The Action Plan was updated based on AC members, Gaby Ahrens, Ivan Cosic (pending re-election) and Inaki Gomez agreeing to lead and/or contribute to the athlete representation within and outside of WADA and the Code and International Standard Update process respectively.
- As it related to a communication objective, the Chair also mentioned that the upcoming WADA Annual Symposium would include a session dedicated to the Athlete Council and led by the Athlete Council. He then invited Karine to share the proposal for another session where athlete feedback is crucial. Karine informed the group that a session on contamination in anti-doping was included on the symposium agenda, shared the initial proposal and invited feedback from the group. After an initial discussion, it was agreed to continue the discussion regarding the two sessions in early January 2025.
- It was also proposed by the Chair, and agreed by the members, that the Action Plan would be a standing agenda item moving forward in order to ensure projects were implemented as planned and to continue to track progress. It was also agreed that the Action Plan, with the tracked progress, updated leads and next steps, would be circulated to all members after the meeting.

## **Developing anti-doping capacity around the world: National Anti-Doping Organization/Regional Anti-Doping Organization Relations**

Tom May, Director of Engagement and Development

- Tom provided an update to the AC on the new Engagement and Development Impact Area including several activities and programs currently being implemented. He provided high level details on how his team evaluates priorities in order to offer support to NADOs/RADOs in a targeted way. Tom also discussed the NADO Expert Advisory Group and the possibility of finding ways for WADA's AC and them to collaborate.
- The group was provided the opportunity to provide feedback and ask questions on different NADO/RADO activities.

## **WADA Regional Office Directors: An introduction**

Francisco Leon, Director, Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office, Rodney Swigelaar, Director, African Office, Yaya Yamamoto, Director, Asia and Oceania Regional Office

- The Regional Offices (ROs) Directors provided an update on several activities underway in their respective regions, their NADO/RADO structures and how athlete engagement and athlete representation plays a part in their day-to-day planning.
- The ROs play a huge role in keeping the W in WADA and their impact on Athlete Engagement and Athlete relations going forward will continue to be paramount.

## **2025 Meeting Events and meeting calendar**

- The group discussed the calendar for 2025 including steps for on-boarding new members, appointing members to Standing Committees and gauging interest for engagement activities while also planning for in-person meetings. The group agreed that as it relates to the appointment of new members to relevant Standing Committees, this would occur early in the new year once all Group 2 members have been elected and confirmed.
- The first in-person meeting was decided to be on 17 March 2025 in Lausanne, Switzerland with a virtual element included for those that are unable to join in person. This meeting will allow for new members to acclimate quickly and ensure the presence of the AC at the Annual Symposium.
- The Chair discussed the in-person engagement activity planned at the King Faisal School the next day (4 December) in Riyadh where members will interact with young Saudi Arabian girls and boys from the region. All members will then be able to observe the Foundation Board meeting the following day (5 December)
- The Chair recognized and thanked those members from Group 2 who have been part of the AC over the past two years. He then adjourned the meeting.