

Speech by WADA President Witold Bańka Upon Re-Election to a Final Three-Year Term

Virtual Meeting of the WADA Foundation Board

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Distinguished members of the Foundation Board, colleagues, friends... thank you. I am deeply honored by your continued trust in me and in the leadership team of the World Anti-Doping Agency. Your vote of confidence today reaffirms our shared mission and our shared values. And I accept this final three-year term as President of WADA with humility, purpose, and a deep sense of responsibility.

I want to take a moment to express my gratitude to Vice-President Yang Yang, who has been an exceptional partner in this journey. Her vision, integrity, and unwavering commitment to clean sport have played a vital role in every major success we've achieved together.

It has been five and a half years of challenges, yes – but also of transformation, of resilience, and of undeniable progress. And now, with three and a half years ahead, I look forward to building on that momentum and driving even greater success for WADA and the global anti-doping community.

Let us first take a moment to look back – not to rest on our achievements, but to remind ourselves of the journey we have undertaken together.

When I became President Elect in 2019, none of us could have predicted that a global pandemic would soon disrupt the entire world. COVID-19 tested the resilience of every institution. WADA was no exception. In a matter of weeks, global testing programs were halted. Major sporting events were cancelled or postponed. And the world entered uncharted territory.

But WADA and the anti-doping community responded quickly and decisively. We developed emergency guidelines to help Anti-Doping Organizations adapt to the realities of lockdowns while maintaining a level of effective testing. We supported the ADOs as they continued with sample collection as best as possible. And we introduced virtual education tools that kept athletes informed and engaged. It was a moment that demanded innovation and leadership – and we delivered.

Another cornerstone of our progress has been WADA's governance reforms. For several years, there had been calls for WADA to modernize its structures... to ensure greater independence, and to elevate the athletes' voices. We listened. We acted.

Since 2018, we've implemented comprehensive and wide-ranging reforms that have reshaped our governance model. The positive results are clear. Today, our Executive Committee and Foundation Board boast a diverse representation – including athlete and independent members – and we have strengthened oversight through bodies such as the Audit and Risk Committee

and our Nominations Committee. Almost half the members of our Board and ExCo are current or former elite level athletes. And the formation of a 20-person Athlete Council is ensuring that those all-important voices are to the fore. That representation has led to the delivery of such initiatives as the Athlete Ombuds Program and the Human Rights Impact Assessment. So, as you can see, these governance reforms are not just cosmetic. They are systemic. They are about building a modern organization that reflects the world in which it operates.

Since our election in 2019, we have also achieved significant financial growth within WADA. When Yang Yang and I started, WADA's annual budget stood at approximately USD 37 million. In 2025, that budget now stands at more than USD 57 million – an increase of well over 50%. This increased investment has allowed us to expand our programs, reinforce our scientific and legal teams, and increase support for developing countries. It also signals growing global confidence in WADA's work and mission.

Another transformative development has been the elevation of education to be a central pillar of the anti-doping system. I know that Yang Yang will speak about that shortly so I won't repeat it.

Beyond education, another area where WADA is making impactful progress is in our Intelligence and Investigations Department. Indeed, it is fair to say that in this area, we've reached new heights. Since its creation in 2017, this department has been a game-changer. It has uncovered complex doping networks. It has supported brave whistleblowers. And it has upheld the integrity of our global system through the launch of successful investigations.

Recently, our efforts have expanded significantly. Since 2022, we have been running a Capability and Capacity Building Project in Europe. This has led to developed intelligence and investigations capacity in 48 countries. We have worked closely with National Anti-Doping Organizations and key Law Enforcement partners (such as Europol and INTERPOL) to smash the supply chain of illegal performance and image-enhancing drugs. It inspired the initiation of more than 100 concerted operations involving law enforcement and National Anti-Doping Organizations. Overall, these operations dismantled 25 illicit laboratories and resulted in the seizure of 25 tonnes of drugs. That is an incredible half a billion doses. This is good for athletes who may be preyed upon or put under pressure by members of their entourage. It is also good for society at large. We know that non-athletes are sometimes tempted to use substances that could seriously harm their health. For clean athletes... we are making it harder for their competitors to cheat.

From Europe, we are now building a broader global intelligence network. This is a shared effort. And it is one that depends on trust and collaboration. We have now launched this project in Asia and Oceania. Representatives from more than 60 countries in those regions will take the in-person training. And the intention is to continue to expand the Capability and Capacity Building Project globally. We will take it to the Americas in 2026-2027. And to Africa in 2028-2029.

The success of these investigations sends a clear message: when we work together, we are far more effective. We recognize that no organization – whether WADA or any other – can win on its own. But united, with the support of governments, sport organizations, and the anti-doping community, we are strong. We are aligned. And it is having the desired result.

Then there is science – surely this is ground zero for the protection of clean sport. In recent years we have continued to invest in the research that underpins all of our work. Scientific research is the foundation of detection, deterrence, and innovation. From enhancing existing

testing methods to funding studies on emerging substances, we are investing more in understanding and staying ahead of the evolving threat landscape. And it is an area that is obviously a priority for many of you too. Last week, we announced a generous additional contribution of \$1.5 million from the Ministry of Sports and Youth from Qatar. This extra funding will go towards scientific research, both within Qatar and internationally. In the weeks and months ahead, we expect other contributions to come in to support WADA's efforts in further developing our research program in anti-doping. It is a sign of both the need to focus on research and the confidence that governments continue to have in WADA to deliver on this most important element of anti-doping.

So that is the past. We have come a long way in five and a half years. And that work was built on the success of our visionary predecessors, such as Dick Pound, John Fahey and Sir Craig Reedie. But where do we go from here? With three years remaining in this presidency, Yang Yang and I intend to work as hard, and with as much urgency, as we did on day one. Because there is still much left to be done.

Looking ahead, WADA is beginning a new chapter, guided by our 2025–2029 Strategic Plan. This plan is rooted in three central priorities: Elevating the athlete experience; Strengthening the global anti-doping system; And expanding the impact of our science, education, and intelligence work.

One of the key milestones during this period will be the 2027 World Anti-Doping Code Update. This update is our opportunity to ensure that our rules evolve with the landscape of sport and science – especially in areas such as contamination, a growing concern that we are already addressing through targeted research and collaboration.

The Code belongs to all of us. Your feedback, your ideas, and your experiences will shape it. This year, WADA has also implemented an “Athlete-Centered Consultation” to ensure we encourage athletes to participate in this important process. So far, we have received more than 400 responses from athletes. Information about this athlete-friendly consultation can be found on WADA's website. We want to encourage more athletes to contribute.

Speaking of the website, we must consider how we are engaging with information technology. The digital age brings extraordinary opportunities – but also new risks. That's why one of our top priorities is enhancing cybersecurity. Athletes entrust us with their most sensitive information – and we must protect it. Our collaboration with Sword Group has already delivered critical upgrades to ADAMS, our Anti-Doping Administration and Management System. But we are not stopping there. We will continue to work with our IT partners to enhance usability, fortify security, and support all stakeholders in managing their programs more efficiently.

On the scientific front, we are pushing forward into new territory. Emerging technologies like dried blood spot testing and artificial intelligence hold enormous promise. The dried blood spot technique is making testing easier, faster, and more accessible. By developing and harnessing artificial intelligence, it will be possible to process big data and make it work for us. Through AI we will be able to identify suspicious patterns early and without having to implement laborious, manual assessments. I am convinced that innovation in this area will be a game-changer for anti-doping around the world.

But innovation requires investment. That's why we're excited about new partnerships with governments like Qatar, mentioned earlier, and with private partners, such as Sword and the

African broadcaster SuperSport. This is exactly the kind of forward-thinking collaboration we need.

Legal affairs is another area demanding urgent attention. Let me speak plainly: I am not satisfied with the quality and consistency of decisions coming out of certain anti-doping tribunals. The rules – as laid out in the World Anti-Doping Code and the International Standards – are sound. They are strong. They are fair and fit for purpose. They are always evolving, and they are built on decades of experience.

But the rules are only as good as how they are applied. We must ensure fairness and consistency across all sports and all countries. And if that means we need a larger budget for legal affairs – to monitor cases more closely and to appeal more decisions to the Court of Arbitration for Sport – then that is what we will do. We must be prepared to double or even triple the number of appeals to CAS we initiate each year if that's what it takes to protect the integrity of the system.

When it comes to monitoring Code compliance, we are also raising the bar. We know the large number of rules and responsibilities that athletes must adhere to in order to avoid a violation. It is absolutely crucial that Anti-Doping Organizations around the world are held to the same high standards, which is not always the case. For the sake of harmonization and quality control, I believe we need to significantly increase the number of audits. And I believe we should publish more data related to our compliance monitoring work. Because transparency builds trust and accountability. WADA's compliance monitoring programs are all about partnership. We will continue to work hand-in-hand with Code Signatories to ensure they understand what is expected and that they have the tools to deliver for athletes.

We must also take a hard look at the independence of testing. Athletes deserve confidence that when they are tested, the process is impartial, professional, and free from national or institutional influence. To that end, we will explore ways for more independent testing of international-level athletes, particularly in countries and sports where there are testing gaps in this regard. This is not just about perception – it is about fairness and credibility.

Let me also address the growing concern of the so-called Enhanced Games. This initiative seeks to normalize potentially dangerous performance-enhancing drugs in sport. It is not merely controversial – it is irresponsible, and it is shameful. It threatens to erode decades of progress in athlete protection, public health, and the very ethos of sport. The event launched last week in the United States. It has been encouraging to see the rest of the world unite against this misguided experiment. Governments, NADOs, sports and athletes have all come together to reject it – and rightly so. We will continue to monitor and respond to this threat with firmness and unity. This includes by urging the authorities in the U.S. to seek ways to prevent it from going ahead as planned.

As I said at the start, the global anti-doping community continues to face challenges and threats. But through all of this, our greatest strength remains collaboration. This is the beating heart of successful anti-doping. Governments, sports organizations, NADOs, laboratories, athletes, law enforcement, scientists – we must all pull in the same direction. There is no place for politics or turf wars in the fight for clean sport. As I have said before: Competition is for those on the field of play – on the track, in the pool, on the court. For us, collaboration – not competition – is what drives progress. So, let's stand together. Let us continue to build a harmonized, transparent, and athlete-centered system that earns and keeps the trust of those we serve.

WADA today is not just an organization. It is a global movement – one that is strong, modern, accountable, independent, and transparent. **Strong**, because of the robust and evolving rules that underpin the global anti-doping system. **Modern**, thanks to governance reforms that reflect today's world and place athletes at the center. **Accountable**, through shared governance and oversight from our diverse stakeholders. **Independent**, because we follow the evidence – wherever it leads us – without fear or favor and not influenced by political, national, or institutional agendas. And **transparent**, because we believe that it builds trust and encourages ethical behavior while enabling open and honest communication.

Five and a half years ago, with unwavering support from the community, Yang Yang and I set out to strengthen the global anti-doping system, and to protect clean athletes everywhere. Now, with three and a half years remaining, and with your continued support, the mission continues. We are energized by innovation, collaboration, and the unwavering belief that clean sport matters. I can assure everyone here that we will work harder than ever to protect the integrity of sport and the dreams of the most important stakeholder of all, the athletes.

Thank you.