

Speech by WADA Vice-President Yang Yang Upon Re-Election to a Final Three-Year Term

Virtual Meeting of the WADA Foundation Board 29 May 2025

Distinguished members of the Foundation Board, colleagues, partners, and friends in clean sport—good afternoon.

Let me begin by expressing my deepest gratitude to you all for your continued trust and for re-electing me as Vice-President, and my friend Witold Bańka as President, of the World Anti-Doping Agency. Your vote of confidence in our current leadership is a powerful affirmation of the progress we've made together, and of the direction we are heading. It has been five and a half years of intense, meaningful work... and of real progress. And while there is always more to do, I want to take this moment to reflect on how far we've come. Witold has gone into more detail but I just want to highlight a couple of things that have meant a lot to me.

One of our most significant achievements has been in education. Anti-doping education is no longer a box to tick. For many years, it was viewed as a supplementary tool – nice to have, but not essential. We have changed that. A stand-alone Education Department was established. The mandatory International Standard for Education was introduced. Through the Anti-Doping Education and Learning platform, known as ADEL, with its targeted education programs for athletes, coaches, and support staff around the world, we are fostering a culture of clean sport from the ground up. We've equipped stakeholders with many education solutions. We have helped many of them to translate the resources into multiple languages. This enables Anti-Doping Organizations to then focus their expertise and resources on more localized approaches to enhance the experience for athletes. And we have aligned ourselves with the broader values of fairness, values, and health. The ADEL platform has seen continued growth since its launch with more than 1.4 million education courses completed. WADA has created a global education hub that well over 50% of ADOs are using in some way to increase the levels of education they can provide for athletes and their entourage. Education is now fully integrated into anti-doping programs around the world. Athletes learn not only about rules and responsibilities but also about ethics, integrity, and the importance of making the right choices. More and more we are seeing prevention and support where once there was only detection and punishment. And we must continue to push a balanced approach in the coming years.

Another area I'm proud to highlight is how far we've come in strengthening athlete relations. Today, WADA is firmly and proudly an athlete-centered organization. The creation and active involvement of the Athlete Council has been crucial to that. The Council, led by Olympic swimmer Ryan Pini, has a representative on the Executive Committee and two on the Foundation Board. It also appoints members to other important WADA committees. Athletes are a permanent fixture around the decision-making table. We recently appointed a dedicated Director of Athlete Engagement – a senior member of staff whose job it is to work closely with the athletes and make sure their presence is felt. And of course, we continue to send an athlete engagement team to major events, including the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The WADA

booth at those events is a very popular spot for competitors as they can learn more about clean sport in an informal, user-friendly setting.

Clearly, WADA's approach to athletes has changed markedly in recent years. and WADA is proactively engaging and seeking feedback from athletes. Through athlete-centered consultation around the proposed changes to the Code and International Standards, WADA has so far received – as Witold mentioned – more than 400 responses. We have also received more than 500 submissions following our call for contributions to our unintentional doping project. This level of engagement is unheard of and, I believe, demonstrates that athletes want to contribute when we provide them with a specific platform to do so. Athletes are integral to the system and their voices are being heard.

We recognize that for athletes, the anti-doping system can be complex. Rules, timelines, the Prohibited List, testing procedures, therapeutic use exemptions, filing whereabouts information – most athletes agree that these things are important and they support WADA's mission. But it can still seem quite daunting. That's why we're working harder than ever to demystify the process. Through clearer communications, more accessible education tools, and direct support, we are helping athletes understand not only the "what" but the "why" behind clean sport.

A specific example is the Athletes' Anti-Doping Ombuds program. This is a vital initiative ensuring that athletes have independent support and recourse. Whether it's navigating complex procedures, ensuring due process, or voicing concerns, we're placing athletes' rights and communication at the forefront.

We will continue to work on ensuring that the athletes' anti-doping experience is as optimal as possible. This includes with a specific project looking at just that: mapping the athlete anti-doping experience, seeking athlete feedback and improving their anti-doping experience where we can.

But most athletes do not operate on their own. The influence of the entourage, including coaches, doctors, trainers, mentors and parents, is immense. WADA continues to support the crucial work of the IOC Entourage Commission, recognizing that protecting clean sport also means educating and holding accountable those who guide athletes from day to day. We must ensure that everyone in an athlete's circle is as committed to integrity as the athlete themselves. And if they are not, they must be held accountable. This will remain a priority for me and for WADA over the next three and a half years.

Looking forward, we know that progress means constantly adapting to new challenges. In recent times, some high-profile cases have reminded us of the serious issue of contamination – a growing and complex problem in anti-doping. WADA is addressing this issue head-on through science, education, and increased cooperation with public health and regulatory bodies.

Another challenge we face is the growing politicization of anti-doping, something we must continue to resist. Our mission must rise above borders and politics. Anti-doping is about fairness. It's about health. It's about the rights of every athlete – regardless of where they are from or the sport they play. We must remain united. Because our strength is our unity. Our legitimacy is our transparency. And our future is built on trust.

Serving as your Vice-President, alongside President Baňka, has been the privilege of a lifetime. And as I begin this final term, I do so with determination and full commitment. Together, let us

continue to protect the values that make sport worth playing—and worth watching. Let us empower the next generation of athletes with knowledge, with fairness, and with hope. The work is not done. But the path ahead is clear. And, together, I look forward to traveling that path over these next three years.

Thank you.