



**SPEECH BY WADA PRESIDENT WITOLD BANKA
AT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT COMMITTEE ON CULTURE AND
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Madame Chair of the European Parliament Committee on Culture and Education, Sabine Verheyen, Committee Members, Members of the European Parliament, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you for the invitation to speak at this important hearing. On behalf of the World Anti-Doping Agency, I am very happy to do so as WADA continues to fulfil its mission to lead a collaborative worldwide movement for doping-free sport.

Since the Agency's formation in 1999, it has been nearly 22 years of continuous progress, improvement and, of course, plenty of complex issues to face. It is remarkable to think of how far, despite all the challenges, WADA and, by extension, the global anti-doping program has come in that relatively short time.



Back in the 1990s, there was not one single answer to tackling doping in sport. Every sport had different rules. Countries had diverging laws. An athlete could, for example, be banned in one nation or sport but be able to compete in others.

WADA was formed in 1999 as the global body responsible for promoting, coordinating and monitoring the protection of clean sport. It started operating later that year as a unique 50-50 partnership between the Sports Movement and Governments of the world.

What followed quickly in WADA's first few years was the delivery of the first edition of the World Anti-Doping Code, which harmonized anti-doping policies, rules and regulations within sport organizations and among public authorities around the globe. The Code is at the heart of the global anti-doping program. Along with eight related International Standards, it sets the rules for all stakeholders worldwide across all sports.



In parallel, the UNESCO Convention Against Doping in Sport provides public authorities with a legal framework. Through this, governments can address specific areas of doping that are outside the domain of the sports movement. The Convention is now ratified by 191 countries, covering more than 99% of the world's population.

Since the early days, the Code and the Standards have been revised three times. In each case, the rules have been strengthened. The bar has been raised. The third and latest version came into force on 1 January 2021 after a two-year worldwide stakeholder consultation process.

Overall, the harmonization of this wide range of activities across all sports in all countries has been a remarkable success. Think about it. There are not many aspects of modern life that have achieved the level of international acceptance of very detailed rules and the cooperation that it requires as in anti-doping in sport. The end result is that we have a system that works well and keeps improving.



In May 2020, WADA’s Executive Committee agreed WADA’s Five-Year Strategic Plan for 2020-2024, which lays the foundation for our strategic activity as the Agency is ‘Leading Anti-Doping in a New Era’. The Plan was developed following feedback from key stakeholders within the anti-doping ecosystem, including athletes.

WADA, as the global anti-doping regulator, is now in a completely different place than it was just six or seven years ago – thanks in large part to the **investigations** and **compliance** advances that have been made, but also because we have significantly strengthened our **science** and **education** activities, and because we have been carrying out wide-ranging **governance** reform of the Agency since 2018.

In the area of **intelligence and investigations**, our independent department, which was developed after WADA received the authority to investigate in 2015, has conducted some far-reaching and successful probes into a range of doping conspiracies. Recently, we have been building and enhancing relationships with local and cross-border law



enforcement, including INTERPOL. And in February of this year, I signed a memorandum of understanding with the European Union law enforcement agency, Europol, formally establishing and facilitating a mutual framework for cooperation between the two agencies in the area of sports doping

Concerning **compliance**, the monitoring of all Signatories to ensure that each delivers a certain standard is a vital part of WADA's mission. Our Compliance Monitoring Program, which was initiated in 2016, is delivering real improvements on the ground. In the past four years, more than 7,000 non-conformities with the Code and Standards have been identified and corrected around the world among the hundreds of Anti-Doping Organizations that are Signatories to the Code – that is 7,000 improvements made to the overall system.

Along with the Athlete Biological Passport, **scientific advancements** – such as in the area of dry-blood-spot analysis and artificial intelligence – and our calls for quality, intelligent testing programs to be conducted by all Anti-Doping Organizations worldwide, we are striving to continuously



enhance the sophistication of the global anti-doping community's approach to catching and deterring cheats.

WADA has also been responsible for establishing and developing a network of accredited laboratories which operate in line with International Standards Organization (ISO) best practice to carefully analyze hundreds of thousands of samples around the world each year.

Meanwhile, preventing inadvertent doping is a top priority for WADA's growing **Education** Department. The Department aims to increase access to education and information worldwide for athletes and other stakeholders, and it provides support, guidance and tools to help stakeholders create and implement their own programs.

These are just a few examples that demonstrate WADA's achievements over recent years. But while stakeholders recognize these achievements, there is consensus that WADA must go further to build bridges and unite efforts to protect athletes and the integrity of sports globally



Building bridges and uniting efforts is facilitated by the partnership between the sport movement and governments of the world which is at the root of WADA's creation and reflected in WADA's **governance**. Like any organization, we consider important that we keep reviewing our governance model to make sure it remains fit for purpose. The vast majority of 70 reforms approved by WADA's Board at the end of 2018 have been fully implemented with the remainder having been well progressed.

Overall, the reforms are to make room for more stakeholders including involving more athletes and more National Anti-Doping Organizations in decision-making. That helps building bridges and uniting efforts.

In addition to our internal governance, I believe strongly in the formation and maintenance of productive partnerships with various other groups. I mentioned previously that we have close working relationships with law enforcement agencies around the world. But that is not all.



We also have strong ties to governments, including the European Union, United Nations, National Anti-Doping Organizations and national sports councils. We also have memoranda of understanding with many of the world's biggest pharmaceutical companies as well as that industry's representative association. This helps them share advance information with us on emerging compounds that may have an enhancing effect on sport performance – enabling us to stay ahead of the game.

Despite all these advancements, we must continually move forward. We must always aim to stay ahead of those who would cheat the system. It is a constant and never-ending challenge.

At the heart of that challenge is funding. This is a critical consideration. At WADA we are all too aware that governments have limited resources and many competing priorities. However, when you consider the need to ensure the health and wellbeing of athletes, coupled with the immense negative toll that doping takes on families, societies, national pride and global prestige, it is vitally important to put anti-doping safeguards in place.



At WADA we, too, have resource constraints. As a global regulator we must make every dollar count to ensure we can deliver on our mandate. We do a huge amount with the contributions we receive from the Sport Movement and Governments. But they can only go so far and it should not be up to them to shoulder this responsibility alone. It is for this reason that I am reaching out for other sources of funding, mainly from the private sector, to supplement what we receive from our traditional resource base. In addition, my WADA colleagues and I are keen to discuss with public authorities and the EU on how to further enhance our funding model.

We also need to address issues such as Governments unilaterally threatening to withhold their funding contribution to exert political pressure on the organization. We cannot tolerate situations where our funding is withdrawn because a single government wishes us to implement certain measures of its choosing. In effect, this holds to ransom the entire system on the whim of one stakeholder. WADA is a global body and regulating the implementation of the anti-doping rules worldwide is not the role of one or a few countries. We are a democratic organization that relies on collaboration, consensus and partnership in order to achieve harmonization



and consistency. Anything that threatens this collegiality and balance, risks destabilizing the entire system.

This is part of a cynical effort to politicize anti-doping in general, and WADA in particular. It must not be allowed to continue. An impartial regulator should not be the object of such political pressures. In recent years we have been dragged into wider geo-political debates that are not part of our mandate. Criticisms we hear include:

- WADA is too soft on Russia;
- WADA is too hard on Russia;
- WADA is controlled by western governments;
- WADA is controlled by the International Olympic Committee; and
- WADA treats some countries differently to others.

Apart from the threat of withholding funding, some countries have threatened to implement extraterritorial laws in order to disrupt the harmonization of anti-doping and weaken the global system. This is what has happened in the United States with the so-called “Rodchenkov Act”.



Ultimately, who will lose out? The athletes. Weaknesses in the system mean more opportunities for bad actors to cheat and to cover their tracks. The vast majority of athletes want to continue to compete clean and they are the ones who will suffer most in this scenario.

And it is the athletes WADA is here to serve. It was a central plank of my manifesto when I was running for this position and it has been a feature of my presidency so far to engage with and listen to the athletes all over the world. I have spoken to thousands of athletes and their representatives to understand their needs, hear how the system can be further improved for them, and respond accordingly. I will continue with this policy for as long as I am President, all the time identifying the right channels to engage even more effectively with them.

Of course, another important stakeholder for WADA is the European Union and its various institutions, including the European Parliament. We are pleased with the level of cooperation that we enjoy and we are working with the EU on a number of initiatives. Just last month I was in Slovenia for the



launch of the 'Healthy Lifestyle 4 All' initiative as part of the European Week of Sport. Everyone at WADA was excited for the Agency to be an official partner.

WADA is applying for a pilot project to enhance investigative capacities in Europe and foster cooperation between European countries. I thank the European Parliament for having approved this project submitted by Tomasz Piotr Poręba MEP – I believe it will greatly contribute to the development of anti-doping within Europe.

The long-lasting commitment of the EU to funding anti-doping projects through the Erasmus+ program is also very much appreciated... as are our collaborative efforts to pool resources in the fields of science, medicine and innovation. We at WADA understand how important these innovations are. In fact for long-term progress in that area we would like to establish a more formal framework for our cooperation with the Commission. It would give us the opportunity to establish a specific agenda and to progress with its



implementation. Therefore, we are discussing together a potential declaration of cooperation to be concluded in the near future.

Last but not least, we are actively engaging with several of the EU Presidencies to make sure that anti-doping as a matter of public health is always present on the agenda of the Council. Europe has always been a leader in the protection of clean sport and sports values.

But despite all the work we do together, I think the EU could do even more to answer the anti-doping call across the continent.

We would like to hear a louder European voice when it comes to demanding that governments take a firmer stance when it comes to protecting clean sport. That includes ensuring the EU helps fund anti-doping at the national level. It is so important to financially support universal solutions that allow all stakeholders to achieve the same results. That is why the pilot program I mentioned earlier is so important. We hope that this is the latest of many more such projects.

Finally, we think there is an opportunity for the EU to show great leadership by fostering further cooperation at the national level between public



authorities and anti-doping organizations. This is an area where much progress can be made.

I would also like to take this opportunity to note with great satisfaction that the European Parliament is currently working on a report on the "EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward". Tomasz Frankowski MEP, who is responsible for drafting the report, invited WADA to participate in the consultations that preceded its preparation. Therefore, I am pleased that his draft report covers doping and its related risks and threats. WADA looks forward to the Honorable Frankowski's final report and we stand ready to collaborate further with the Parliament and all EU institutions.

Europe has always played a pivotal role in the development of WADA. Many representatives of European public authorities have held decisive roles in the establishment and development of WADA. They helped to nurture and support WADA to what it is today. Honorable Members of this Committee, we continue to benefit from the wise counsel and passionate activism of you and your representatives.

As I said before, the very nature of WADA is a collaboration, a team effort. I look to each of you to be cheerleaders for anti-doping in each of your



countries and in the corridors of European power, and to ensure that European athletes are protected by a strong program. We need you to be the voice of clean sport in this region.

Thank you.