



**‘Innovation in the Fight Against Doping – How the World Anti-Doping Agency is leading a collaborative effort to build confidence in the integrity of sport’**

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Ms. Mariya Gabriel, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth.

Mr. Tomasz Frankowski, Member of the European Parliament and Co-Chair of the European Parliament’s Sports Group.

Other representatives of the Government of Bulgaria and the European Union, esteemed delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you for the invitation to speak at this important event. Unfortunately, I have to do so remotely. That is still the world we live in unfortunately. But I think we all see light at the end of the tunnel and I hope to be able to meet you in person someday soon.

I speak to you today proudly as the President of the World Anti-Doping Agency. I was the Minister of Sport and Tourism in the Polish Government for four years and was previously a 400m runner. In 2019, I was elected to become the fourth President of WADA and it was my honor to take office on 1 January 2020 as the Agency continues to fulfil its mission to lead a collaborative worldwide movement for doping-free sport.



Since our formation in 1999, it has been nearly 22 years of continuous progress, improvement, innovation, collaboration 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 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. Confidence in the integrity of sport was not where it needed to be.

WADA was formed in 1999 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, which has been revised and strengthened three times since the first edition, is at the heart of the global anti-doping program. It sets the rules for all stakeholders worldwide across all sports. It does so in conjunction with eight International Standards concerning:

- Prohibited Substances and Methods;
- Therapeutic Use Exemptions;

- Testing and investigations;
- Accredited laboratories;
- Protection of privacy and personal information;
- Code compliance by Code Signatories;
- Education; and
- Results management.

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. In addition, the Council of Europe's Anti-Doping Convention is another helpful legal instrument that has highlighted the Europe's commitment in this area.

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 – and works generally well.



WADA's 2020-24 Strategic Plan, approved in May 2020, lays the foundation for WADA's strategic activity as the Agency is 'Leading Anti-Doping in a New Era'. The Plan was developed following feedback from key stakeholders acknowledging how much WADA had achieved and also identified a number of areas where WADA could improve or focus more.

A key focus of that plan is for WADA to lead a collaborative effort to protect the integrity of sport around the world. And to do that requires innovation. Without innovation there is no progress. And without collaboration there can be no innovation. The two go hand in hand.

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 partnerships and innovations we have forged.

Whether it is in **investigations, compliance, education, scientific** research or **medical** advancements, WADA and our partners throughout the anti-doping world are constantly moving forward, all underpinned by wide-ranging **governance** reform of the Agency since 2018.

## **Intelligence and Investigations**

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. It has done so by gathering information through our successful and confidential whistleblower program, called ‘Speak Up!’ – and by working with a range of stakeholders around the world to ensure cases are fully investigated. Recently, we have been building and enhancing relationships with local and cross-border law enforcement, including Europol and INTERPOL. In February of this year I signed a memorandum of understanding with Europol, formally establishing and facilitating a mutual framework for cooperation between the two agencies in the area of sports doping.

## **Compliance**

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, nearly 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.

## **Science and Medicine**

Along with the Athlete Biological Passport, scientific advancements are being made – such as in the exciting new areas of dried-blood-spot analysis and artificial intelligence. For dried blood spot, this will become a very valuable addition to the testing program. There are many advantages, especially in relation to cost and making the process less invasive for athletes. DBS will allow testing authorities to target more athletes and collect more samples. WADA has been leading a collaboration of Anti-Doping Organizations to address all the technical challenges and adapt anti-doping rules to allow for this. In fact, next week, the relevant Technical Document comes into effect around the world. We have already been trialing certain elements of DBS testing at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo and it will be rolled out for routine use at the Games in Beijing early next year.

For artificial intelligence, the potential is unlimited, particularly in the area of analyzing big data. WADA is helping to fund three separate projects in France and Canada that are exploring how artificial intelligence can advance global anti-doping. It is a very exciting time.

It is these kinds of scientific innovations that are helping us respond to the complex challenges that we face. To survive, we must always keep moving forward. We are always striving to enhance the sophistication of the global anti-doping community's approach to catching and deterring cheats... building confidence in the system all the time.



## **Education**

Meanwhile, preventing inadvertent doping is a top priority for WADA through our growing Education Department. We are increasing access to education worldwide for athletes and other stakeholders, and providing support, guidance and tools to help Anti-Doping Organizations implement innovative education programs, such as our courses that were aimed at athletes and coaches heading to Tokyo for the Olympics and Paralympics, which were completed by more than 7,000 people. Underpinned by social science research, evidence- and values-based education is a core component of any anti-doping program and is being strengthened through a new International Standard for Education, which is the most significant advancement of education policy since the inception of the global anti-doping program.

These are just a few examples that demonstrate WADA's innovations 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

## **Governance**

To do this, WADA needs the right governance model. 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 ensuring that there are more independent voices, more athletes and more National Anti-Doping Organizations involved in decision-making. This process of engaging athletes, in particular, is one that is very close to my heart and was a key element of my presidential campaign.

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 of course the Government of Bulgaria and the rest of the European Union; the United Nations; National Anti-Doping Organizations and national sports councils; and anti-doping laboratories. We also have a memorandum of understanding with the pharmaceutical industry in order for them to share information with us on new and emerging drugs that may have an enhancing effect on sport performance. This allows us to try to get ahead of the curve and develop effective tests for these new compounds before they even become available on the market.





Like everyone else, we have been facing challenges posed by the global pandemic. In the past year and a half, WADA has provided assistance and guidance to the anti-doping community, including athletes. It was encouraging to see how quickly testing returned to normal levels in the build-up to the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo this summer. Overall, it is fair to say the anti-doping community is doing what it can to protect clean sport during these difficult times.

Meanwhile, from our side, with the strengthened tools highlighted earlier, coupled with our new Strategic Plan and an improving governance model, WADA will continue to grow stronger. On the front line, the Agency's talented, knowledgeable and passionate staff of about 140 employees are standing up for the athletes of the world every day of the year.

That is what I wanted from WADA when I ran the 400m for Poland. And that is what I am determined to deliver today as its President. Along with our Vice-President, double Olympic gold-medalist short-track speed-skater Yang Yang from China, there is a fresh, athlete-centered approach at WADA. We are not afraid to act in the best interests of sport's precious integrity.



In closing, I want to say that WADA is a much stronger regulatory body than only a few years ago. That is not to say we are happy to go this far and no more. We are not content, and we must continue moving forward – always aiming to stay ahead of those who would threaten sport’s precious integrity. It is a constant and never-ending challenge that we face. We cannot rely on one or two weapons – we must be ready to protect sport from all angles with nimbleness and constant innovation.

We are confident that with the support of all our clean sport partners, including Bulgaria and the other member states of the European Union, we will succeed in our unique and important mission to protect sport from doping.

Thank you once again for your kind invitation to address your conference today.