

# Speech by WADA President, Witold Bańka 139<sup>th</sup> International Olympic Committee Session

Thursday, 3 February 2022: Beijing, China

Dear IOC President Thomas Bach, IOC Vice-Presidents, IOC Executive Board Members, IOC Members, ladies and gentlemen.

First of all, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to provide you with an update on WADA's activities. It is great to be able to gather in person again. I am delighted to be here with you in Beijing for the 2022 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.

I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and all your team at the IOC, as well as the local organizing committee. It is to the organizers' credit, both those in China and in the IOC, that this massive event is able to go ahead at all. It is also remarkable that these Games have been organized within such a short time since the Tokyo Games and under such challenging circumstances. So, congratulations to all concerned.

## **GLOBAL TESTING IN THE LEAD-UP TO THE BEIJING GAMES**

Since my most recent report, to the 138<sup>th</sup> IOC Session held in July 2021, WADA and the global anti-doping community have been working together to maintain the integrity of the system in spite of

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COVID-19. The response of Anti-Doping Organizations was quick and effective to an evolving situation. At every stage, WADA has been providing [Guidance](#). And, at least initially, we applied a degree of flexibility as it related to compliance monitoring in order to recognize the challenges imposed by the pandemic on Anti-Doping Organizations.

Overall, testing numbers have been maintained at normal levels throughout 2021. In the last quarter of the year, there have been more than 24,000 samples collected per month, which is very encouraging. This is despite restrictions put in place in many parts of the world to deal with the omicron variant of COVID. Crucially, out-of-competition testing in 2021 has remained at a level significantly greater than for 2019.

In the build-up to the Games, WADA urged all Anti-Doping Organizations to make the most of the remaining time to ensure that all athletes bound for Beijing were tested and to implement the testing recommendations that they received from the Pre-Games Expert Group being led by the International Testing Agency - the ITA.

WADA also reminded them that the IOC-funded pre-Olympic long-term storage program delivered by the ITA remains available to them, at no cost. This excellent initiative allows them to put samples away securely in a long-term storage facility for possible further analysis in the future, which has proven to be a very effective deterrent.

These Games will be important as a new testing method will be further implemented. Dried blood spot analysis is an exciting development for anti-doping. It carries several advantages over traditional

forms and will be an important complement to those established methods of sample collection.

Collecting just one spot of blood per sample will make things easier for doping control officers. It will be less invasive for athletes, easier to transport and easier to store, with possible additional benefits related to sample stability.

WADA has been leading a collaboration of Anti-Doping Organizations, including the IOC, to address all the technical challenges and adapt anti-doping rules to allow for the development of dried blood spot. This partnership builds on research conducted by several Anti-Doping Organizations and laboratories around the world, which I would like to thank.

Elements of it were in place for the Tokyo Games last year but the Beijing Games will be the first time it is routinely used across the testing program. We look forward to seeing how well dried blood spot works with the intention of it being introduced more comprehensively across all sports and countries.

As we always do at the Games, WADA has an Independent Observer team present here in Beijing to monitor the anti-doping activities of the Olympic Games, which is being operated by the ITA on behalf of the IOC. The team will work in partnership with the ITA and the organizing committee to ensure the most effective anti-doping program is delivered. In the same way, we will also have an Independent Observer team to monitor the anti-doping activities of the Paralympic Games, in partnership with the International Paralympic Committee.

Speaking of the Independent Observer program, WADA has just published the team's report from Tokyo. The conclusions from that report show that the anti-doping program, as managed by the

International Testing Agency on behalf of the IOC, was robust and comprehensive... and in accordance with the World Anti-Doping Code and International Standards. This was achieved in the context of severe restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the Games' postponement by one year. I would like to congratulate and thank everyone involved for their commitment to protecting the integrity of the Games by successfully delivering the anti-doping program.

We have also been working hard with the WADA-accredited laboratory here in Beijing to ensure it is ready for the challenge that awaits.

## **PRE-BEIJING GAMES EDUCATION**

As it relates to pre-games education of athletes and their entourage, WADA has led the way in collaboration with the IOC, ITA and the International Paralympic Committee. Our education programs for Beijing 2022 have been aimed at athletes and coaches coming to the Games. They have been extremely well received by Anti-Doping Organizations, National Olympic Committees and National Paralympic Committees, investing in educating their teams. Our Beijing education courses are available in a variety of languages and I can tell you that, to date, there have been more than 3,300 completions of the two modules with hundreds of learners still in progress, which represents a great response.

## **INVESTIGATIONS, INCLUDING RUSADA COMPLIANCE AND OPERATION LIMS**

It has been a busy time for WADA's independent Intelligence and Investigations Department. In October 2021, it concluded three separate investigations and published summary reports. I do not propose to go over the detail of those investigations. All the reports are all available on WADA's website.

Meanwhile, WADA has continued to monitor the implementation of the January 2021 Court of Arbitration for Sport decision concerning the compliance of the Russian Anti-Doping Agency. In addition, significant work is still being conducted by WADA in relation to the follow up of doping cases as part of the Agency's Operation LIMS related to the data and doping control samples retrieved by WADA from the former Moscow Laboratory. More generally, WADA has been doing everything in its power to protect the Beijing Games. Our Legal Affairs Department has been collaborating with the IOC and ITA. We have worked hard to ensure every pending case regarding any athlete intending to participate in Beijing has been processed.

Following on from my July report, WADA's internal RUSADA monitoring project team continues to monitor RUSADA's re-instatement conditions as set out in the Court of Arbitration for Sport award. The Agency is working with RUSADA to assess their progress towards achievement of those conditions by the end of this year. We have started a dialogue with the Russian authorities in the hope that going forward Russia will maintain a strong Anti-Doping system.

## **COMPLIANCE MONITORING**

Like WADA's investigators, it has also been a busy time for compliance monitoring as Anti-Doping Organizations work hard to ensure they apply the 2021 revised World Anti-Doping Code appropriately. In September, eight Anti-Doping Organizations were declared non-compliant. This related to issues related to non-conformities in their anti-doping programs or lack of implementation of the 2021 Code within their legal systems.

Compliance monitoring is a central pillar of WADA's mission. It is vital for the global program that all sports and all countries follow the same set of rules and implement compliant anti-doping programs. This harmonization means that athletes know what to expect from the anti-doping system, no matter where they are from or where they are competing.

WADA will continue to make every effort to ensure Anti-Doping Organizations solve their issues before any declaration of non-compliance, and to help those who have been declared non-compliant to return to good standing as quickly as possible.

## **GOVERNANCE REFORM**

Another significant achievement for WADA in recent months has been continued progress as it relates to governance reform. You may have seen the latest round of reforms. These were unanimously agreed by the Foundation Board in November and will have far-reaching impact on the Agency's future. When implemented, there will be more independent voices around the table and increased representation for athletes and National Anti-Doping Organizations. We are very grateful to all stakeholders that participated in the consultation. It was encouraging how the members of the

ExCo and Board fully embraced the whole process in a very constructive spirit. It was also clear during the all process that WADA's DNA of an equal partnership between sport and the public authorities should not only remain unchanged but should be reinforced.

Of particular note, there were a change of attitude and constructive interventions made by the United States Office of National Drug Control Policy representative on our Board. In the weeks that followed, we were pleased to receive the remainder of the U.S. Government's financial contributions for 2021. We view this as a renewed demonstration of support by our U.S. partner and we hope that going forward the voice of reason and a constructive and collaborative attitude will prevail in the US

## **CONCLUSION**

As the global anti-doping regulator, WADA is now in a completely different place than it was just six or seven years ago – thanks in large part to advances in investigations and compliance, and also because we have carried out wide-ranging governance reforms and significantly strengthened our education activities.

The global anti-doping landscape is very different, too. The fight against doping continues to develop globally. Many of our stakeholders are showing progress and a real determination to collaborate and reach sustainable solutions – in a harmonized and cohesive way.

But there is still a lot of work ahead of us to protect the dreams of clean athletes. We must continue moving forward – always aiming to be ahead of those who would cheat the system. It is a constant

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and never-ending challenge that we face. We cannot rely on one or two tools – we must be ready to protect sport from all angles, with nimbleness and constant innovation.

We at WADA look forward to your ongoing support. Together we will work with you all to further strengthen the global anti-doping system. Bit by bit and day by day.

Thank you all for your efforts and ongoing commitment to clean sport.