

## **Speech by WADA President, Witold Bańka WADA Foundation Board meeting**

**Friday, 18 November 2022, Montreal (Canada)**

Dear Foundation Board Members, Dear Friends,

It has been three years since you elected me as WADA President in Katowice. Many of you were present that day in the capital of Silesia, my home region. I recall very well how privileged and excited I felt – and still feel – but also a great sense of responsibility that accompanied me that day. I knew that I was undertaking a very challenging mission. Nothing, however, signalled certain problems that I would have to face. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a huge challenge for all of us. For the whole world, not only for sport. This is not how I imagined the beginning of my WADA Presidency, which for two years was dominated by this invisible enemy.

I am proud of how WADA and the entire anti-doping community rose to the challenge, but I hope that this problem is slowly getting behind us.

Today's meeting, during which you will decide on the re-election of WADA's President and Vice President, is a good occasion to summarize the past three years and share with you my plans for the next term to show you my vision. Just over three years ago, when I launched my presidential campaign, I presented my manifesto to many of you. I promised that as President, I would do my best to deliver on these promises. Let us see what to date has been achieved in this regard.

## **Stronger anti-doping system**

While running for the position of WADA President, I was aware that we needed to strengthen the anti-doping system, and a strong system required building capacity, not only globally, but also on an individual, national level. There are still too many countries in the world where insufficient funds are allocated to the fight for clean sport.

Therefore, in 2020, I announced the need to seek alternative sources of funding for the fight against doping. From the very beginning of my Presidency, it became my priority. At WADA, we have prepared a strategy for our approach to partnerships with the private sector. WADA is interested in partnerships at the national, continental and global levels.

We are actively looking for global partners in areas such as Athlete Engagement, Development, Education, Science, Technology and Innovation. We have also selected strategic industries with which we can enter into partnerships without compromising WADA's mission. The first results of our activity have already been announced. In April, we signed the first sponsorship contract with the African broadcaster SuperSport, who became a continental partner of WADA. Funds from this partnership will be allocated to educational activities in Africa.

This is not the end. We are in talks with several other companies, including a potential global partner. I cannot say more now because of the confidential nature of our negotiations, but we will hopefully announce some very positive news soon.

However, alternative sources of funding are not only partnerships with the private sector. We are also very active in applying for funds from international institutions. This year, after intense efforts, WADA won a grant to implement a pilot project of the European Union dedicated to expanding the intelligence and investigative capabilities of Anti-Doping Organizations (ADOs) across the continent. This project will be largely financed by the EU, up to EUR 1.43 million. It will include, among other things, innovative and expert-led education programs delivered by a team built around WADA's independent Intelligence and Investigations (I&I) Department, building a special IT platform for investigators, assistance in creating legal frameworks for cooperation with law enforcement authorities and whistle-blower protection, and a communication strategy. The beneficiaries of the project will be Europe's National Anti-Doping Organizations and law enforcement agencies. We want to raise awareness of the need for cooperation between these entities. The project is quite popular. Hence, we are already thinking about its expansion beyond Europe, again using EU funds if possible. We are applying a similar approach in the field of science, where we are looking for national and international partnerships. In May this year, we renewed our agreement with the Fonds de recherche du Québec (FRQ), which will ensure CAD 2 million is directed to anti-doping scientific research over the next five years.

That is not all. We are in talks with several countries and institutions discussing possible partnerships. This is one of those projects in which your involvement will be highly appreciated, dear board members. In particular, I am looking towards ministers and other government representatives who may supervise or at least be aware of funds and institutions operating in the field of research in your respective countries.

We also do not forget about the voluntary contributions from our stakeholders, starting with the IOC. I wish to thank President Thomas Bach, who pledged USD 10 million in Katowice for the better protection of the clean athletes. Since then, many governments agreed to match these funds and in the last three years, we managed to obtain another USD 5 million for scientific and investigative activities. I sincerely thank you all for that great effort.

Strengthening the anti-doping system, as stated in my manifesto, is also about building partnerships between well-developed and less developed anti-doping organizations. WADA, under my leadership, has always been supportive and will continue to support such partnerships. What is very promising is the will from more and more NADOs to collaborate with each other. Currently, there are dozens of such formal and informal partnerships. We also have many examples of successful cooperation between NADOs and RADOs, especially within the African region.

## **Good governance**

In 2018, WADA entered the path of governance reforms. Thanks to two phases of reforms which were completed in May this year, WADA has become a more modern, open and accountable organization with athletes at the center. Some of you, like me, have been involved in this process from the very beginning. I believe it has changed our organization a lot. Governance reforms have had a significant impact. This is true not only for all WADA structures, from expert groups and standing committees to the Executive Committee and Foundation Board, but also for its management processes, bringing new quality to the functioning of our organization.

Let me remind you of what we have managed to do together over the past two years in terms of good governance:

- We approved a Code of Ethics and created an Independent Ethics Board.
- We created a reformed and renamed WADA Athletes' Council; I will say a few more words on this subject later.
- We changed the composition of the Board to include more athletes' representatives and to welcome the National Anti-Doping Organizations to our Board.
- We changed the composition of the ExCo, which includes the WADA Athletes' Council Chair and another independent member.
- We have also introduced several technical changes that will positively impact the work of our organization, such as a clear separation between the Foundation Board and the Executive Committee.

I must emphasize that all these changes were developed in the spirit of good cooperation and compromise between various groups of stakeholders of our organization. Thanks to this, they were unanimously adopted by the WADA Foundation Board at its meetings in November 2021 and May 2022. This is a special reason for me to be proud as it has reinforced the spirit of cooperation between the Public Authorities and the Sports Movement.

I am exceptionally grateful to you for this. Now is the time to implement the adopted reforms and this is what we will focus on in the coming months and years. Of course, this does not mean that there will be no further governance reforms in the future. In order to remain a modern, well-structured and athlete-oriented organization, WADA will

continue to monitor how it is governed – but for the time being we will now focus on other areas of activity.

Improving the quality of WADA governance is not only a matter of adopted reforms and changes in the structures of our organization. It is also a matter of our approach to strategic planning which we have been implementing since 2020, when WADA's new strategic plan for 2020-2024 was adopted. Our organization has undergone a significant transformation since then. Today our processes are more efficient and ensure we stick to the budget while still fulfilling our mission.

## **Collaboration with stakeholders**

When running for the position of WADA President, I was aware of how complex the anti-doping landscape was, how many stakeholders it involved, and how important it was to build relationships based on mutual respect and understanding. That is why I made a commitment to be the President of dialogue, someone who treats all stakeholders equally.

It is true I was elected as a government representative. In the past, I was a minister myself and represented the government side on the WADA Executive Committee. However, now I am the independent President of WADA who speaks to and works with everyone. This is how I approach my mission. I have always wanted my Presidency to be as inclusive as possible, and myself to be the President who is as approachable as possible.

In order to achieve it, I try to meet with all stakeholders. So far, I have had nearly a hundred meetings with ministers and prime ministers of world's governments. There

aren't many sports ministers who I have yet to meet. However, I think I will complete this list in the coming years. I have also met with almost 70 National Anti-Doping Organizations and international federations since I became WADA President. I maintain regular contact with most of them, listening to the needs and voices of those who fight doping on the front lines and are also responsible for the first experiences of athletes with the anti-doping system. Over the past 3 years, I have also participated regularly, both remotely and in person, in ASOIF, ANOC and ARISF meetings, IOC sessions and summits, as well as intergovernmental meetings, Council of Europe and UN meetings, reporting on WADA's activities and participating in the exchanges of views. I have also had dozens of individual meetings with the leaders of the sports movement.

## **Athletes**

Most importantly, I have spent the last three years meeting the athletes of the world. They are my priority. It was and is still my wish that the voices of athletes should be listened to. Since there is not a single athlete voice, I have met hundreds of them during my term of office to understand better their expectations. I met with all continental athlete commissions operating under the umbrella of the continental associations of National Olympic Committees, the athlete committees of national anti-doping organizations and international federations. I have met with athlete groups and committees during roundtable meetings as well as individually.

Three years ago, I identified better communication with the athletes and increasing their role in decision-making processes as key objectives. I think we have done a lot in recent years on both those fronts. The WADA Strategic Plan for 2020-2024, adopted in

May 2020, makes “Be Athlete-Centered” one of our strategic priorities. This is the best illustration of the changes taking place at WADA. The athletes are at the center of everything we do. They are also much better informed of what we are planning as a global regulator.

We have also made enormous progress in increasing the athletes’ role in the management of our organization. Thanks to the governance reforms I mentioned, WADA created a reformed and renamed athlete representation, namely the WADA Athletes’ Council. Unlike the Athlete Committee, the Council will be a representative body, bringing together athletes from many different organizations, backgrounds and sports. It will include athletes nominated by the IOC and IPC from among those who were elected to their respective athletes’ commissions, athletes elected by the athlete commissions of all international federations that are signatories to the Code, as well as athletes co-opted to this group by the previous two groups to fill the skills and diversity gaps in the composition of the Council. In addition, the Chair who will be elected by the Council, will become a member of the Executive Committee, and two other athletes will be elected by the Council to sit on the WADA Foundation Board, having a real voice on the most important decisions of our organization.

Speaking of athletes, I cannot fail to mention another crucial project that I have supported from the very beginning, and I consider important for communication with athletes, namely the Athletes’ Anti-Doping Ombuds. I strongly believe that this project is very much needed. Anti-doping will always be a difficult and complicated field. Therefore, athletes need someone who will be at their disposal to explain the aspects of it that directly concern them. I believe that this project will pass successfully through the pilot phase and will be implemented on a larger scale. At this point, I would



like to thank Ben Sanford, who, as chair of the Athlete Committee, played an important role in both projects, athlete representation and Ombuds. Thank you, Ben.

## **Communication**

This brings us to the subject of communication, which is one of my priorities. Perhaps I will not be objective if I say that for me it is one of the most important changes in the way our organization operates in recent years. Today WADA is an organization that is more open to the outside world, which tries to communicate our complex activities to our stakeholders and the public in an understandable way. We try to react quickly, comment on many current matters, and at the same time provide reliable information. We also use many information channels, including social media, which is especially important in the case of young people. Our brand refresh, which was delivered in early 2022, is helping us to reach more people and engage publicly in a meaningful way. Our pledge to 'Raise the Game' is helping shape what we do and explain how our people are delivering against our vision in collaboration with the global anti-doping community. It reflects the positive perception and experience that we want people to have of WADA.

But this is not the end. In the future, I would like to continue these activities on a larger scale. I would like WADA to conduct a large media campaign aimed at making people aware of the importance of the mission we are pursuing. We must continue to evolve the image of this organization and of anti-doping in general and change some of the public's perceptions. Yes, anti-doping is there to 'catch and punish', but it is also very important that we 'support and prevent', too. Therefore, my goal for the future is to continue raising awareness about our work and improving communication.

## Education

Speaking of 'supporting and preventing', another area that I would like to devote more attention to is education. When I ran for the position of WADA President three years ago, our organization was just changing its approach to education. A stand-alone Department for Education was created, and in 2020 we adopted the 2020-2024 Social Science Research Strategy. It helped reverse the trend I described in my manifesto, where WADA had financed social science research projects primarily in developed countries where funds were already available and where there were many more opportunities to obtain grants for such projects. Since then, WADA has put more emphasis on sharing the outcomes and setting up research partnerships. Most of the grants go to developing countries today.

In addition, in the following years, new initiatives appeared, such as the Global Learning and Development Framework (GLDF) and Global to Local (G2L). They helped us to finally define WADA's role in the area of education and structure our approach to training and setting professional standards in anti-doping. Last but not least, in 2021 we launched a new and improved Anti-Doping Education and Learning platform, also known as ADEL.

Via the new ADEL platform, WADA provides education and learning opportunities for the anti-doping community worldwide, including athletes, coaches, parents, medical professionals and more. It is a modern and easily accessible tool.

## Intelligence and Investigations

Summarizing the past 3 years, it is hard not to mention the area of Intelligence and Investigations. From 2020-2022, we continued Operation LIMS, our investigation into the data retrieved from the Moscow Laboratory. As of today, we have reached 166 athletes sanctioned with additional 81 charged and 254 cases that remain under investigation. The majority of those cases are based on circumstantial evidence, in particular raw data that we received because of the ExCo decision from September 2018. Without these data, none of the Russian athletes could have been charged or sanctioned. We also continued our support of Europol's Operation Shield that tackles doping, trafficking, fake medicine and COVID-19 related crimes. This cooperation was strengthened with the signing of MoU with Europol in February 2021.

We also completed a number of our own operations, including our investigation into the International Weightlifting Federation and operations such as Hercules, Echo and Arrow. We have launched and contributed to many training activities, including the already mentioned EU Pilot Project and Interpol Regional Workshops in South America, Europe and Africa with a goal to strengthen and expand cooperation between Law Enforcement and Anti-Doping Organizations. We also created our temporary Compliance Investigation Section within the I&I Department to address compliance related allegations – funded by the IOC and governments.

Finally, we have continued promoting WADA's Speak up! Platform. I am very proud to say that the volume of Speak up! messages received has significantly increased to 35 reports per month. More than 1000 reports have been received since its launch in 2017.

This means that Speak up! is growing and gaining more credibility and trust among athletes.

## **2021 Code and Standards**

A major project that WADA delivered, under the watchful eye of the Legal Department, was the 2021 World Anti-Doping Code review process. This exhaustive two-year, three-phase process involved extensive stakeholder consultation and ultimately delivered greater protection for athletes and clean sport, not just through the Code itself but also its related International Standards and the Athletes' Anti-Doping Rights Act.

Since it took effect on 1 January 2021, WADA has been working closely with Anti-Doping Organizations to ensure its proper implementation. I thank the sports, governments and NADOs for their high level of cooperation in that regard.

## **Science and new approach to laboratories**

The last topic I touched upon in my manifesto was science and the approach to laboratories. As you already know, WADA's budget for science has fallen drastically in recent years, from USD 6.5 million in 2006 to USD 1.8 million in 2017. An organization like ours cannot afford to save money in this area because the efficiency of our core activities depends a lot on how advanced we are in the field of science. Only with a strong science agenda can we catch up and eventually beat those who cheat. That is why I am pleased with our decision taken in May to increase WADA's budget for 2023, 2024 and 2025 and to allocate a minimum of USD 4 million to research. As you know, I

was very much engaged in convincing you to take this very much needed decision, and I am very grateful for your support.

However, we do not rely solely on our regular budget to strengthen our scientific capacity. As I said, we are also actively looking for partnerships with national and international research institutions. I sincerely hope and expect that these efforts will bring tangible results soon.

Finally, I will briefly mention the issue of laboratories. In my manifesto, I saw the need for a more proportionate distribution of accredited laboratories worldwide. At the moment, the majority of them operate in Europe. There are fewer laboratories in the other regions, including only one in all of Africa. All this means that some ADOs must invest heavily in shipping samples which affects their other activities. After all, the money saved on shipping could be invested in testing or education. Therefore, during my Presidency, I attach particular importance to the issue of laboratories. We have worked intensively at WADA not only to maintain the high-quality standards of our accredited laboratories, but also to expand their network. In recent months, the laboratory in Lisbon has regained accreditation, and Athens and Shanghai have joined the candidate pathway. We are also conducting intensive talks and cooperation with the Egyptian authorities about the laboratory in Cairo, so that it could soon enter the probationary phase and soon become the second accredited laboratory operating in Africa.

Summing up what I've said so far, I believe that the past 3 years have resulted in enormous progress of the organization in many areas, including governance, exploring

alternative sources of funding or relations with stakeholders, especially considering the circumstances in which we have operated.

I am speaking primarily the COVID-19 pandemic, because of which the whole world held its breath for two years. Although this threat is not completely gone, the world is slowly returning to normal. However, I also see positives in this period. As an organization, we have successfully navigated the anti-doping community through this difficult time. From the beginning of the pandemic, we have performed very well as a leader in this community, preparing and then updating our guidelines for both anti-doping organizations and the athletes. I think the great success of that time was that anti-doping came out of the pandemic unharmed. We didn't let the cheaters think for a moment that this was their time. Thus, we have maintained the credibility of the system and the confidence in it of all clean athletes. Now we are slowly leaving this situation behind us, and things are getting back to normal. The number of samples collected is already higher than before the pandemic. Moreover, this period resulted in many new ideas in the field of doping control, innovations such as dried blood spot which may turn out to be game changers in the near future.

The pandemic, however, was not the only challenge we faced during my first term. In December 2020, one year after the decision on RUSADA's non-compliance was taken by WADA Executive Committee, the Court of Arbitration for Sport issued the final verdict on the matter. Although the court confirmed all the evidence presented by us, the scale of the consequences imposed by CAS and, above all, their length, was an unpleasant surprise for us. I have expressed this many times in my statements. After the CAS decision was rendered, we began the robust, time-consuming and costly

process of monitoring its implementation, ensuring that the consequences imposed on RUSADA, although softer than those proposed by us, are respected.

Another major challenge has come this year. On February 24, Russia launched the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. Once again, sport had to take a back seat. Therefore, the only appropriate reaction from our organization was to condemn this Russian aggression. I was one of the first leaders of sports organizations to do so publicly. In the civilized world, there will never be a place for brutal warfare and aggression against another nation. However, even this difficult time brought hope to the anti-doping community showing how noble, altruistic and in solidarity we can be.

On the initiative of WADA, many National Anti-Doping Organizations and International Federations agreed to include Ukrainian athletes in their Doping Control Programs funding sample collection and analysis from their budgets. As an anti-doping community, I think we passed this test.

We have shown our humanity in the face of callous brutality.

It was certainly easier to go through all the challenges and difficulties I have faced in the last 3 years with Vice-President Yang Yang by my side.

Our cooperation was harmonious from the very beginning, and with time it turned into friendship. As a former athlete, Yang Yang allowed the organization to better understand the perspective of those for whom we make an effort every day to fight for clean sport. She was particularly involved in promoting educational activities. Yang Yang has significantly contributed to all the achievements that I am speaking about

today. It is a great honour for me to work with her and – I hope – to continue our mission for years to come.

These will be busy years. Many challenges still lie before us. Therefore, let me tell you now in brief about our plans for our next term of office.

After the second phase of governance reform has been completed, our attention should be focused on our anti-doping core activities. We have to intensify our efforts in areas such as building anti-doping capacity, developing anti-doping programs, education, science and innovation, compliance and investigations. Despite our sustained efforts in these areas, there is still much work to be done.

One thing that hasn't changed since my election manifesto was published three years ago is that the anti-doping system is still dependant on its national links. Therefore, in the coming term of office, we must focus our efforts on building anti-doping capacity in all corners of the world. We will work more closely with leaders in regions with insufficient financial resources and promote partnerships between anti-doping organizations. We will be present wherever our assistance is needed! I will also continue my bilateral meetings with public authorities and convince them to invest in the future of their athletes by building strong anti-doping programs. For this to happen, we need accountable and trustworthy governments. Because the burden of building a strong national program rests primarily with the national authorities. Of course, you need financial resources for this, but a lot can be done even with minimal financial involvement. WADA provides many ready-made solutions. On the financial side, as a former Sports Minister, I cannot accept the fact that in some countries there is a lack of



funding for basic anti-doping activities and at the same time there are resources for many officials to attend major sporting events.

Speaking of funding, I realize that more financial resources will be needed to get WADA more involved in many areas. Already now, thanks to the strategic decisions of the Foundation Board, we have managed to increase our budget from USD 37.6 million in 2019 to just over USD 50 million in 2023. Moreover, some substantial voluntary contributions have been made over the past three years by the IOC and some governments. What is also important is that we intend to continue actively seeking private partners and obtaining funds from international and national institutions, as well as from funds and programs coordinated by organizations like the European Union. It is a long process, but I believe it will allow us to obtain the funds necessary to support clean sport in the world's remotest corners. We are ready to make that effort.

I have particular plans for the coming years in several areas of our activity. One is monitoring compliance with the Code. Last year, we introduced a new Policy for WADA's Application of the International Standard for Code Compliance by Signatories, the so-called Prioritization Policy. It increases compliance obligations to more signatories and more anti-doping program areas. Dividing signatories into tiers, the policy creates a clear framework in terms of when and for what reason WADA will initiate a compliance procedure for signatories within respective groups. This is a definite tightening of the policy. We now demand much more from our signatories, and we will demand even more, because athletes deserve to train and compete in different countries on an equal basis and be subject to the same anti-doping regime.

The second area in which I have great hopes is education. I would like us to work on the success of many of our programs, as well as the ADEL platform, to work on more region-specific activities, such as the Global 2 Local initiative, which we have piloted in Europe. I would also like to work intensively on educating the youngest athletes and informing the public that doping is a public health problem. Another issue is science and innovation – here, too, I see many opportunities for our activities to grow in the near future, as I have already talked about. Finally, I wish that activities such as the EU Pilot Project would lead to the building of a professional network of anti-doping investigators in Europe and then in the world, which would allow even more robust investigations within global partnerships.

These, in a nutshell, are the priorities of my Presidency in the coming years. I am convinced that – as with my first term – I will not run out of challenges.

Before I finish, I would like to thank one important group of people without whom my first term as WADA President would certainly have been a much more difficult experience, namely the WADA employees. Over the past three years I have had the opportunity to work with real professionals. Your enormous knowledge, experience and, above all, hard work, although often invisible to an external observer, is greatly appreciated by the members of our Board and I. Thank you all very much.

I would also like to thank Olivier with whom I spent countless hours talking over the phone, on Teams and in person. We have shared ideas, solutions and sometimes frustrations. Your help and good advice during these 3 years have been invaluable. I hope you are ready for another term.

Let me close with the words that I addressed to the participants of the World Conference on Doping in Sport in Katowice, as in my view they are more relevant than ever.

“Sport is a beautiful idea. The world’s last one with the power to unite people no matter what their political views, religion, skin colour or age. This idea must be protected. We have to prevent destroying it. If we allow it, this will be the end of sport. People will turn their back against it. They will not want to watch competitions in which faster, higher, stronger will be possible only through cheating. We must therefore do everything we can to save this idea. To this end, we will sometimes have to take difficult decisions. Yet, I am convinced we will be able to make them together.”

Thank you for your attention.