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Handling of Russia Case Exposes WADA's Fundamental Governance Flaws.

The WADA Executive Committee (ExCo) has voted to reinstate the Russian Anti-Doping Organisation (RUSADA) based on what was intended as a secret eleventh hour compromise with the Russian Federation. Even when the recommendation was "leaked", there was insufficient time for genuine scrutiny let alone consideration and input from sport stakeholders, many of whom are fundamentally impacted by it.

Since August 2017, when the "Road Map" for compliance and reinstatement was introduced, the overwhelming majority of the international sport community, including WADA, had been united in supporting it. WADA had reiterated that position publically a few months prior. Regrettably, at the last moment, WADA has surrendered to pressure from the IOC and the Russian government to substantially weaken the terms of the Road Map.

The weaknesses of WADA's governance model, as NADO representatives have emphasised during an ongoing review, have been clearly exposed. ExCO members, who have inevitable pressures and priorities around this decision which extend beyond purely the issue of doping, have clearly made the decision based on those other conflicting priorities. This is not good governance, nor does it reflect a good governance model. WADA must be an effective and resolute global anti-doping regulator and governor - exclusively.

Discussion and, where necessary, compromise is appropriate when initially agreeing a path forward. Compromise cannot be appropriate (or acceptable) when enforcing such agreements. While flexibility can have a place leadership critically requires steadfastness. Most especially this is so when so many stakeholders in the sporting community are bound by an anti-doping Code which can be unbending and harsh but (as WADA insists) cannot be ignored or softened to suit. As the global regulator, WADA should have been objectively enforcing the agreed sanctions and requirements, not compromising them.

In its decision, WADA has assured the sporting world that strict conditions assuring access to materials and information have been imposed on the latest reinstatement decision. The assurance is of less comfort to sport given that WADA had "strict" conditions on reinstatement already in place. Any decision to re-impose a ban will arguably be even harder now than it would have been to maintain the terms of the original ban.

One real tragedy is that this decision undermines the credibility of an organisation which, in many other ways, has created a much better foundation for the application of clean sport programmes and has numerous excellent, hardworking technical staff who warrant support.

INADO's task now, along with the rest of the sporting community, is to work hard to ensure that we have a WADA and, most critically, a robust anti-doping system, which will restore and provide confidence that clean sport is protected.

**iNADO is the international member association of NADOs. NADOs have the sole and unequivocal mandate to protect clean athletes, without conflicting responsibilities such as promoting sport. iNADO's 67 Members represent all Olympic Regions and conduct the majority of anti-doping work world-wide each year.**