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Anti-Doping Convention (T-DO)

Compliance with Commitments project

Report of the Monitoring Group's Advisory Visit to Azerbaijan on the Anti-Doping Convention

Baku, 12-13 June 2002

Introduction

1. The composition of the team and the programme of the visit are set out in the Appendix.
2. The team was welcomed by the Minister of Youth, Sport and Tourism, Mr A GARAYEV, and was encouraged by his full support for the objectives of the visit throughout the time we spent in Baku. Mr I MADATOV, Head of International Relations at the Ministry, prepared and organised our visit impeccably. Mr Farhad HAJIYEV acted as our interpreter for the two days and we acknowledge his essential contribution. To all these persons, and to the many others that we met and from whom we received full cooperation, we express our gratitude, as we do for the warm hospitality offered to the team during the visit.

Present Situation

3. Azerbaijan signed the Anti-doping Convention on 28 June 2002 (i.e., just after the visit). This act demonstrates the political will to implement the Convention. However, as the Minister himself recognised in our initial briefing on 12 June, the means to do so are lacking at the moment. Azerbaijan is a relatively new independent country, and the increasing successes of Azeri athletes at Olympic Games and World and European Championships are an important means of establishing a national identity and recognition of the country on the international scene. The establishment of new national structures for sport, including anti-doping, after the collapse of the former USSR and its centralised structures, is a more difficult task and one upon which there is little experience to draw. The population of Azerbaijan is just under 8m (which compares to that of Austria, just over 8m) so the country is large enough to aim for a satisfactory level of autonomy. Sport is very popular, and there are very strong traditions (and successes at Olympic and world championship levels) in weightlifting, wrestling, boxing, and shooting.
4. The present anti-doping work is based in the Sports Medicine Centre where Azeri athletes are physiologically controlled three times per year. 118 staff work at the centre, under the able direction of Dr Lyudmila GULIYEVA. The Centre was formerly under the Ministry

of Health: it is now under the authority of the MYST. An Anti-Doping Commission, chaired by Dr Guliyeva, and with 7 other members (from the Sports Medicine Centre, the Academy of Physical Culture, and the Ministry) is the principal operational body for anti-doping questions. The Commission does very active work with regard to providing information to coaches, trainers and athletes, particularly on the Lists of Prohibited Substances and Methods. In this regard, coaches are given much responsibility vis-à-vis “their” athletes. One Azeri weightlifter was found positive in 1995 and his coach was dismissed. In the increasingly competitive world of international sport, it may prove difficult to give to the same person, the coach, responsibility for top-level performance and responsibility for keeping his or her athlete “clean”. The budget for the Commission is, we were told, \$US500 per year for “minimum technical works”. It is clear that much of the Commission’s operational expenditure (printing and distribution of materials, seminar costs, official journeys, secretarial and other costs) are borne by the institutions in which the members work, and is not included in the official figure. However, by any standard, this is a very low amount and reduces the chances of the Commission’s work being as effective as one would like.

5. Some doping controls are conducted in Azerbaijan. When official championships are held there, a budget for in-competition testing is included in the event’s budget. At the FILA (Wrestling) European Championships in May 2002, 11 tests were carried out. There appears to be no domestic in-competition testing and there is no out-of-competition testing, apart from that carried out by IFs or WADA (and those controls are not at very numerous as far as Azerbaijan is concerned. We were told that IWF has done a few such controls). One national federation (weightlifting again) said that it conducted three out-of-competition controls in 2001. It was however difficult to obtain precise data on who did what and how often and with what purpose. We were told that on some occasions, samples taken at athlete doping control procedure training sessions were sent to a laboratory for analysis, and if positive, the B sample, kept in Azerbaijan, was then sent to the IOC-accredited laboratory at Moscow. The situation regarding testing is somewhat confused and lacks direction.

6. There is no doping control laboratory in Azerbaijan and we noted with approval that there are no plans to create one. At this stage, the resources that would be necessary to set up such a laboratory can be much more usefully deployed in developing clear and consistent anti-doping policies and effective programmes of testing and follow-up. As mentioned above, when samples require officially recognised analysis, they are sent to Moscow. When the Ankara laboratory is accredited, a second laboratory will be close to hand.

7. We were struck by the very widely-shared condemnation of doping. The cultural and ethical values which underpin any anti-doping work are accepted by all levels of sport and particularly so by the athletes themselves. This common attitude is a great resource upon which policies can be developed. Before going to the Sydney Olympic Games, Azeri athletes and coaches individually signed an anti-doping “Olympic Oath”. The athletes we spoke to all appeared to be conscious of the long-term dangers to health from doping: but at the same time, they said that they wanted more information than just medical/health aspects. No time should be lost in exploiting this unique moral capital: as Azeri athletes gain more knowledge of what happens in other countries and sports, and as their success is translated into financial rewards, the relative protection from outside influences, and their present lack of resources, will lessen, and the present “innocence” will be subject to more sophisticated temptations.

8. Training of doping control officers is taking place in the framework of the bilateral agreement, initiated by the Monitoring Group, between Azerbaijan and Turkey. Relations

seem to be warm and successful. The Minister is very conscious of the importance of international cooperation in anti-doping matters: this visit being one sign. Another is his desire to make the necessary arrangements for the payment of Azerbaijan's contribution to WADA.

9. The National Olympic Committee and several sports federations together with some major clubs have developed successful sponsorship agreements with major companies and the commercial sector in Azerbaijan and have obtained significant own resources. The NOC has built seven large sports halls throughout the country: these halls are also used for high-level training. Many leaders in sport have powerful connections with other sectors of society, as government ministers, directors of state institutions, or in business and industry. The weightlifting federation has installed its major training facilities in the Civil Aviation Academy, (the president of the federation is director general of the National Civil Aviation company) and thus has access to the academy's sophisticated medical staff and equipment. This is very important for the development of sport in general at this stage and it facilitates cooperation at decision-making levels.

10. The State Academy for Physical Culture and Sport provides some anti-doping education (one module in each year) to its students (future physical education teachers and sports trainers and coaches) and is about to start a new multi-disciplinary course, integrated into the curriculum. We welcome this development: anti-doping education (and information) must always be at least as sophisticated as the doping methods in use. There is also an opportunity here to develop knowledge to counter the possible use of supplements, etc: see paragraph 14.

Proposals.

Article 3 of the Convention: Domestic Coordination

11. In order to face up to the challenges of a changing world and the challenges coming from the rapid developments in modern international sport, Azerbaijan must develop a comprehensive and effective anti-doping policy and programme: education and information is a very necessary part of these but is not enough by itself. The Ministry and sports movement should together develop a genuine anti-doping strategy and long-term plan to govern the policy and programme.

12. The present Anti-Doping Commission is doing a good job within the limits of its means. But the means and the authority of the Commission are inadequate. The budget of \$500 per year is not even enough to carry out a comprehensive education programme. The Commission obviously has good contacts with the national coaches but we are not sure what is the real content of the information seminars organised for them. The Commission has no role in test result management in the case of a positive: this role is handled by the federation. It is premature to propose for Azerbaijan a national anti-doping agency: but a reinforcement of the role, power and budget of the Commission is essential. A new strong, national anti-doping body or organisation, with some of its members perhaps not unlike the present Commission, should be formed. The members, from varied backgrounds and experience, must be able to act in an independent capacity. There should be no difficult or institutional conflicts of interest within the organisation. It should have powers over all sports federations. This body could be a kind of joint venture between government (in particular the Sports Ministry) and the sports movement (NOC and federations and main sports clubs). The organisation

should be responsible for all the key tasks concerning anti-doping and operate at a national level. Its mandate and structure should be clearly defined, together with its powers over federations and athletes. The legal basis for its work must also be clear: either through law, or through regulation, or possibly by contracts. We favour a basis in public law, but that decision belongs with the government.

13. Most international level athletes and coaches in Azerbaijan are in a formal sports structure and framework nearly all the time, either for training or for competitions. They have a strong group mentality and group ethics. This close supervision and living together makes it difficult, so we were informed, to use doping substances without being detected. This cohesiveness also provides ideal conditions for developing a model “suivi” of athletes, ethical education opportunities, and other aspects of anti-doping work.

Article 4 of the Convention: Restriction of the availability and use of doping substances and methods

14. The availability of steroids, epo, etc, and supplements does not appear to be a major problem in the country at the moment. How long this situation will last is unknown. Athletes asked us many questions on supplements, vitamins and herbal preparations: so there is an incipient awareness of the problem. If the development of the strategy mentioned in paragraphs 11 and 12 includes the preparation of an anti-doping law, the opportunity should be taken to include provisions restricting availability of and trafficking in banned substances, in the spirit of Article 4.1 of the Convention, and as developed by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Recommendation N° R (2000) 16 on common core principles to be introduced into national legislation to combat the traffic in doping agents.

15. At the same time, governmental funding policies for sport, sports federations and athletes should be developed to include clear anti-doping criteria. These can be positive as well as negative measures: carrot and stick, with additional support for those that carry out their anti-doping well, and penalties for those that do not. They should apply to all sports, including football.

Article 5 of the Convention: Laboratories

16. See paragraph 6 of this report.

Article 6 of the Convention: Education

17. Further to our remarks at paragraphs 7, 10 and 14, we believe that, in addition to the information on the list of banned substances and methods provided to athletes and coaches and doctors, which is linked to education on the health aspects of doping, more work could be done to reinforce the ethical base of the fight against doping. Questions regarding supplements etc should also be tackled in this context. This would correspond to the wish of the athletes themselves. The new multidisciplinary module at the Academy of Physical Culture is one means of starting such work for future students there.

Articles 7.2 and 7.3 of the Convention: Cooperation with sports organisations

18. There is an urgent need to develop basic regulations and procedures for many aspects of doping matters. There are, for example, no written doping control procedures, no

regulations for out-of-competition testing, no test result management protocols and there is no transparent disciplinary system. The various Recommendations of the Monitoring Group provide a basis for this fundamental work. The forthcoming World Anti-Doping Code makes this requirement even more necessary. The new anti-doping authority proposed in paragraph 12 should recruit or include a legal advisor to draw up these regulations and procedures. The new anti-doping organisation will of course also need some permanent staff to be able to discharge its duties correctly.

19. Another priority is to develop and put in place a national testing programme, both in-competition and especially out-of-competition. Most of the 100 plus international level Azeri athletes live and train in the country so finding the athletes is not a problem. A programme for testing at the major sports national championships must be started as soon as possible, even if it is modest to begin with. The development of an out-of-competition testing programme is a necessity. We suggest that the national programme should start next year with say 10/15 controls, at least half of which should be out-of-competition, and doubling each succeeding year by the same amount till a total of c300 annual controls is reached. To begin with, some of these controls could be conducted by WADA or by the international federations with such programmes and these controls could be included in the target figures above. Such a programme is necessary for a further reason: as mentioned in paragraph 7, the belief and trust in the “cleanness” of Azeri athletes, by themselves and by others in the country, is common and widespread. This is very encouraging, but only a genuine programme of out-of-competition testing will enable the Azeri sports world to demonstrate to others that this is the case. The absence of a programme could lead to a suspicion that there is a “cover up” or that there is a screening policy in place to protect the reputation of Azerbaijan. A further reason is equity: experience from other countries shows that the success of individual sportsmen and women tends to lead to less solidarity and more individualism: whether or not this happens in Azerbaijan as well, all athletes must be treated on an equal basis.

20. While treating of cooperation with sports organisations, we believe that the Azerbaijan Olympic Committee, which obviously has substantial resources (see paragraph 9), could make a possibly significant financial contribution to the national anti-doping programme. The same may apply to some federations and even some of the major sports clubs, where many national athletes are based and trained (for example, 95% of the national shooting team are members of the State Oil Company’s Sports Club in Baku).

21. We believe, as indicated in paragraph 4, that some consideration must be given to separating the present potentially conflicting responsibilities of coaches and others to develop top-class athletes and performances, and their duty to keep their protégés free from doping.

Article 8 of the Convention: International Cooperation

22. As mentioned in paragraph 8, Azerbaijan already has done much by way of international cooperation. We encourage the authorities there to continue and to develop further such cooperations and agreements. This includes of course taking advantage of the contacts and experience offered through the Convention and its Monitoring Group; working in cooperation with WADA, the international federations, and continuing with bilateral agreements to develop knowledge in specific areas of expertise required.

Conclusion

23. There is no doubt in our mind that the will to do more in Azerbaijan in the anti-doping field is shared by all the actors that we met, and this in conformity with the standards of the Anti-Doping Convention and other relevant norms. We formed the impression that if an Azeri athlete was to be found positive, it would be regarded as a national tragedy and shame. The need to avoid such an occurrence gives a further impulse to developing as rapidly as possible an effective national anti-doping programme. We hope that the principles outlined above will provide helpful elements in this essential work.

24. The Monitoring Group has started a process for following-up progress within countries that participate in the "Compliance with Commitments" project, including those countries which have asked for advisory visits. We look forward to seeing how far Azerbaijan has been able to develop its national anti-doping structures, policies, and programmes and the recommendations above when it submits its report towards the end of 2003.

Professor Dr Ulrich HAAS
Mainz
27 June 2002

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Appendix

Composition of the Advisory Visit Team

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Programme

12 June 2002

Morning

Visit to the Alley of Victims

Meeting with the Minister of Youth, Sport and Tourism, Mr A Garayev and the Vice-Minister, Mr V Aliyev

Meeting with the Chair (Dr Guliyeva) and Members of the Anti-Doping Commission

Afternoon

Meeting with the Director General of the Civil Aviation Company and President of the Weightlifting Federation (Mr Jahangir Askerov) (Baku)

Visit to the Civil Aviation Academy: national weightlifting training centre, meeting with athletes and coaches (Bina)

Visit to the Neftchi sports-health centre of the State Oil Company, meeting with officials, athletes and coaches

13 June 2002

Morning

Meeting and Round Table with the Rector (Dr Abiyev) and Professors at the State Academy of Physical Culture and Sport

Visit to the Sports Medicine Centre

Visit to the Olympic Complex (training centre, sports halls) (Director: Mr Guryanov) and Genjlik sports club

Afternoon

Meeting with the Vice-President of the National Olympic Committee of Azerbaijan, Dr Chingiz Husseynzadeh

Meeting and seminar with leaders of sports federations, athletes, coaches.

Dinner with the Minister, the Rector and others.