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Report of the Consultative visit to Russia on anti-doping policy

Moscow, 23-25 January 2001

For the attention of Mr V Khotochkin, 1st Deputy Chairman of the Russian Federation State Sports Committee.

The visit was made at the request of the Russian authorities, in the context of the CDDS/T-DO "Compliance with Commitments" project. Special attention was given to policy, laboratory and education/information questions. The team was composed of Prof Hemmersbach (Norway, head of the anti-doping section (IOC accredited) of the Hormone Laboratory, Aker University Hospital in Oslo); Mr Holthoer (Finland, deputy member of the Finnish Anti-Doping Committee) and Mr Walker (Council of Europe, Head of the Sports Department). The programme of the visit took the form of a seminar, chaired by the Russian Sports Minister, Mr Rozhkov, with participation by numerous leading sports officials from the public authorities, sports federations and the Russian Olympic Committee; a visit to the State Duma and a meeting with Mr N Gerasimenko and chair of the Duma committee on Health and Sport; a visit to and seminar at the Anti-Doping Centre and the IOC accredited laboratory directed by Mr. Semenov; and numerous formal and informal discussions with leading sports officials. These latter included further meetings with the Minister, Deputy Chairs of the State Sports Committee, Mr V Khotochkin and Mr N Lents, the first Vice-President of the National Olympic Committee, and presidents of some large sports federations, and the Head of the Moscow Laboratory.

The visiting team takes this opportunity of thanking their Russian hosts for the successful organisation of this visit and for the generous hospitality shown to them.

Description of the situation

The preparations for the Moscow Olympics in the 1970s provided the key for developing anti-doping activities in the then USSR, including the development of the Moscow laboratory. The main obligations were assumed by the USSR NOC. In 1989, it signed a bilateral agreement for total mutual cooperation with the USOC. The fall of the USSR interrupted activities in this field, though not before it signed and ratified the Anti-Doping Convention in 1991, to which Russia became the successor state in 1992.

The team was informed that in the second half of 2000, the Russian government developed a series of new initiatives for national anti-doping activities and that with the agreement of the Duma, new and additional finance will be allocated to this sector in 2001. In addition, the State Sports Committee submitted to the Duma during our visit proposals for amending the Sports Law, to include stricter provisions to control the use and trafficking of prohibited substances, and to enhance the responsibilities of athletes. The visit therefore took place at a particularly opportune time for providing inputs into this developing situation, bearing in mind best current international practice.

The renewed interest in anti-doping in Russia is especially important because Russia attaches great significance to success by Russian sportspeople and teams in Olympic Games, world championships and other international events. We stressed that anti-doping has to be considered now as an integral part of sports policies and elite sports policies in particular. Participation in such major international sports events could become dependent upon criteria which include effective national anti-doping policies.

Our hosts provided us with information - much of it written and translated into English - on the current situation and future prospects. Amongst the latter, the State Sports Committee is preparing a new anti-doping strategy and policy: this will be backed up by concerted action in and by other ministries and governmental agencies. The wide scope of action is to be approved. A committee, bringing together the interested bodies (State Sports Committee, the NOC, sports federations, Ministries of Health, Defence, Education, Interior and Youth; customs; the academic world and the media) is a positive step. This underlines the need for a clear and consistent policy, applied in the same way over all the country (in itself a problem by virtue of the sheer size of Russia and of its mosaic nature) and also by all the parties involved. Anti-doping policies are relatively complex operationally speaking, and clarity and consistency are extremely important elements for success. In the first stage, it would seem appropriate for the leadership and coordination of this policy to be lodged with the State Sports Committee, but we recommend that already thinking be given to a longer-term solution and in particular - as many Parties to the Convention have already done - the setting up of an "independent" body (that it is to say, independent of any one particular interest, body or sport, but "co-managed" by all interested parties, including the athletes). The number of Parties and other countries with independent national anti-doping agencies is increasing all the time and Russia should be one of them within five years.

This factor is linked with others: Russia can take inspiration and ideas from some of the best practices and policies in other - including neighbouring - countries; sport is international so anti-

doping policies need also to be consistent between countries; such consistency must be built upon common high standards. The adoption of the ISO 17025 standard for laboratories and of the ISO draft norm 18873 for doping controls (prepared by IADA) are but just two examples of how standardisation and harmonisation of national policies are becoming part of the accepted infrastructure of anti-doping. In this context, we recommend that the Moscow laboratory obtains proper ISO certification (we were informed that this should be on the way) and that the State Sports Committee applies to WADA for inclusion in the IADA IPT4 team for working towards the ISO PAS 18873 standard for Doping control, which will soon become necessary for mutual recognition between national bodies. In the latter context, we believe there is scope for a productive bilateral arrangement and agreement between Russia and another country aimed at the development of Russia's anti-doping policies and procedures. Russia acknowledges the ground that it has to catch up and such assistance, support and encouragement could be extremely useful. There are amongst the Parties to the Convention a number of effective national models and all of these could also be used as a source of inspiration for shaping what will in due course be called the "Russian model".

We can sum up this part of our recommendations by saying "better less, but excellent, rather than lots, but poor".

As far as the implementation of policy is concerned, we were struck by the emphasis placed on the role and place of the laboratory. While recognising that laboratories play a key role in the overall picture, national anti-doping policies must include many other aspects, not least a substantial education and information element. Our hosts were well aware of this. The general narcotics problem in Russia, particularly amongst young people, is bad and young sports persons move in a milieu where the use of drugs is widespread. We were pleased to hear that the authorities are planning to spend up to 50% of the anti-doping budget on education and information: such aspects are in the short-term not often sufficiently funded but they offer one of the paths for long-term success. We must, nevertheless, stress the need for adequate resources within the overall budget for this part of the new programme to be effective in a country as big and diverse as Russia. More detailed proposals on this question are in Appendix 1 to this report.

In this context, we also learned of the recent creation of a new private foundation "Sport against Drugs" which is aiming its activities particularly at young people. We wish it well in its work.

Laboratory.

The Moscow "lab", which dates from the late 1970s, is now beginning to show its age, both in the building and in its equipment and instrumentation. Little investment has happened during the 1990s and only the devotion and the creativity of the staff has kept the laboratory functioning correctly. (It was temporarily suspended for a period in the 1990s.) Its capacity of 15,000 analyses per year is not fully used: 1390 samples were processed in 2000. This figure also shows the size of the challenge facing the Russian sports authorities in developing a credible anti-doping plan. There are 2500 elite level athletes in Russia and we recommend that the aim should be to increase fairly rapidly to 10000 controls and analyses per year, a target which could be reached by 2004/5. A proper proportion of these 10,000 controls, say 60-70%, should be out-of-competition controls.

The financial aspects of the laboratory are significant, especially with regard to the replacement of the instruments and to the training and (a factor which is particularly problematical in Russia) retaining of appropriately specialised staff (currently 18 persons).

Appendix 2 lists our detailed recommendations in this respect.

Other elements.

As the present stage in Russia is the eve of a new departure and a new beginning, we take this opportunity of making a number of other recommendations which we hope will be useful:

1. We have mentioned before the need for a clear and consistent policy right from the start. It will be for the Russian authorities to judge whether this policy should be formulated through a law. We believe however that a law is certainly necessary to control and reduce the availability of doping substances, a major problem in Russia and its neighbouring states (and, by virtue of the international illicit trade in them, also for other European countries) as proposed in Recommendation R (2000) 16 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (appended to this report). The proposal submitted by the State Sports Committee is a welcome step in this direction.

2. A number of models of national anti-doping policies exist and they could be a source of inspiration in developing the Russian model. In detail, inspiration could also be taken from other countries for developing patterns for the training and accreditation/certification of doping control officers who will play a key role in the new policy. As voluntary DCOs will probably be difficult to find, these DCOs maybe half- or part-time officials and professional competence will have great significance.

3. Close cooperation with the sports bodies is clearly essential and the opportunity must be taken to develop consistent policies and procedures for all sports. Because of this need, consideration should be given to developing procedures for doping controls and subsequent disciplinary procedures which are common to the whole sporting movement. The notion of "independence" (i.e., not dependent on any one body or a sports federation to take the decisions affecting its sport) is crucial. This also applies to the laboratory which should not know which athlete's sample is being analysed. We recommend that the principle of independence in this sense is incorporated consistently in the new policy. "Transparency" is also a key concept which independence encourages. If these two concepts are united, it is much more likely that the athletes will have confidence in the "system". Not only is that an objective in itself, it will also contribute to reducing the overall cost by minimising the possibility of athletes contesting the decisions which concern them.

4. Clear and consistent procedures need to be established at all levels of the system and for all sports:

- in the training and designation of doping control officers;
- in the procedures for selecting athletes for controls, and in particular for out-of-competition controls (the number and proportion of which should be increased: we were informed that it is currently about 20-25% of controls);

- in the procedures for the taking of doping controls, and subsequent steps, notably chain of custody matters;
- in disciplinary, appeal and arbitration questions and procedures.

For many of the above matters, the Monitoring Group of the Anti-Doping Convention has adopted Recommendations on standard procedures, which should provide the basis for the appropriate decisions by the Russian authorities.

We end by recognising the size of the challenge facing the Russian authorities in this field: there are large historical, cultural, social, structural and economic/financial difficulties to be overcome if success is to be achieved. But we also acknowledge the political courage leading to the decision to make a major new start in this area. We wish all those who are involved or who will be involved "bon courage" and steadfastness of purpose in this endeavour: success will have a real as well as a psychological impact both at national and at international levels.

George Walker
Strasbourg
29 January 2001

Peter Hemmersbach
Oslo

Alexander Holthoer
Lappeenranta

Appendix 1

Notes on the Russian anti-doping education and information strategies

CAMPAIGNS

I was happy to note the great concern about both the prevailing situation and the future. The doping problem is well recognized and the will to act is there. Sections on anti-doping are included in Federal target-oriented programmes towards youth and children and doping in sports is prohibited by law since 1999 (law on physical culture and sports in Russia, article 23 §4.4). There is also a lot of effort and resources put into the national anti-drug campaigns (“Sport against drugs”). Prophylaxis is the key word in this campaigning and is probably right. The anti-doping issue though, is considered a part of these programs and as such the Russian authorities are willing to apply the same educational and informational strategies. I am not convinced on the effect of this connection for three main reasons:

THE USERS: doping in sports is more clearly a matter of individual choice or ignorance whereas drug abuse, apart from the first stages, is usually a matter of addiction. Also, the potential users of doping and drugs are seldom found in the same populations – at least not among the active, licensed sportsmen.

THE ETHICS: The distinction between doping in sports and abuse of medical substances in the normal population has to be made. In sports it is a question of respecting common rules for competing on equal terms. In the normal population we address it as a health issue. Fighting doping in sports cannot be done just by referring to potential health-problems but also through ethics taught to and understood and believed by every single sporting individual.

DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS: some potential doping agents can be bought over-the-counter in pharmacies where drugs are distributed by and through illegal handling. Drugs are “marketed” aggressively whereas doping-agents usually are taken by free will or mistake. These distinctions call for slightly different approaches in the kind of information is presented, by what channels it is distributed, who is informed and when.

THE EDUCATION

There would be two main goals for the anti-doping education.

Informational: keeping anti-doping personnel, physicians, coaches and athletes up to date on vital information (new banned substances, methods and procedures.)

Educational: building an atmosphere of disapproval towards doping among those within sports and those on the outside – killing the market.

The emphasis on conducting anti-doping education in Russia is put on holding seminars in national teams (seniors and juniors) for physicians, coaches and athletes. The anti-doping courses at higher educational establishments for training coaches and teachers of physical education as well as additional courses in the programs of medical institutions are helpful. Seminars and courses are a great tool for handing out information.

This is good work towards the coaches and physicians, but I believe the athletes should be informed and educated earlier on lower levels than the national teams. Also, building a sound ethic code requires more direct and informal channels directly to the individual athletes.

Aiming general anti-doping information at schoolchildren of secondary schools gives support to building the right atmosphere among the youngsters, but still needs direct channelling to the sporting people.

It was unclear how the sports federations were taking active part in the educational process and distribution of anti-doping information.

VISIBILITY

There was a lot of concern about the lack of visibility of the anti-doping issue. Prime time television is too expensive and it is difficult give objective information through the press, which tends to write about things of general interest or when things go wrong... The anti-doping information is best spread through independent channels controlled by the anti-doping organisation. If and when the subject arises at root level among the athletes – then there will be a need for the media to write about both doping and anti-doping as matters that concern the individual! The effect/cost-ratio of using general media for anti-doping information is not great, but they have a role in the next chapter.

BUILDING TRUST IN THE ANTIDOPING ORGANISATION

Media should be used to present the anti-doping work for the public. It is more important to keep up good quality and fairness in the process than to try to catch every doped athlete and risking some wrong decisions. The reason for this is simple: bad news travel further than good news within the sports community. The Russian anti-doping work should be presented in public – not only as technologically and methodologically adequate, but as the best friend of the honest athlete. This will encourage first a few, then some more and finally a great amount of sportsmen to publicly support the anti-doping process spontaneously. The national heroes are of course close to the public and can be used for general campaigning but actively using elite and top-level athletes in anti-doping campaigns has its risks. This sounds bad, but the bottom of the campaign falls out if even one of these athletes gives a positive test result for any reason. Using these athletes for publicity is easier than for educational purposes. They are not close to the standard athletes, not geographically or measured by performance, which makes it easier for most athletes to identify with an everyday local hero in the local club that takes a stand against doping than with a national hero with the same message.

A high standard in the process, clear and concise ruling with the individual athlete as a customer – and telling all this to the media will eventually give the anti-doping organization the trust and support they need. The individual athletes will not fully accept their personal responsibilities before they firmly believe in the support of the system.

THE IOC LIST OF BANNED SUBSTANCES AND METHODS

I was struck by the fact that the on a yearly basis updated list was actively distributed only in tens or hundreds to the sports federations and national teams, not tens of thousands! In Finland there are 40 000 copies of this list distributed every year and the recipients have learned to ask for the list along with the media.

The list is a vital instrument of education and information that should be given to any sportsman at any level, every coach, every physician and every pharmacy that can be reached in the country. How can we ask the athlete to be responsible if this list is not at hand at every occasion? It is also the most effective way to educate all parties. Distributing a small book with all the who, what, where and how of anti-doping gives us the possibility to tell the athletes that they are in the end responsible for their own bodies. Financially this wide distribution makes it easier to get extra funding from sponsors who like to reach the whole sporting community every year! It is cheaper visibility than any media. At least in Finland it has been worth the work.

THE CHANNELS

The sports federations have to be tied to the anti-doping process by agreements with both sanctions and rewards. In Finland the federations are responsible for the education of their own athletes and the distribution of materials produced by the anti-doping organization. The ministry can financially sanction them if there is a feel that they don't comply with the agreement and put enough effort into this work. The federations also have to finance and do some doping tests on their own behalf using the accredited testing personnel of the anti-doping committee. This list is also under scrutiny from the ministry. In this way sports federations show their commitment to the anti-doping process.

The anti-doping organization educates and lectures at sports schools, coaching seminars also. There are web pages on the Internet with updated information and articles on anti-doping issues.

The Finnish sports physicians are active in the anti-doping field or should we say: the anti-doping organization is active through them as the anti-doping committee (ADT) and office are part of the association for promoting sports medicine and physiological testing (LIITE). In this way all moves in the anti-doping field are quickly out on the medical field closest to the athletes. The list of banned substances is posted to every pharmacy and sports physicians know to ask for the list. The yearly update Finnish pharmacopoeia, Pharmaca Fennica, also has an article on doping and banned substances and every physician throughout the country reads this book!

FINALLY

I believe that putting your efforts to the individuals rather than the masses, even if the size of this task is frightening in a great country like Russia, will eventually give you the results you want. The educational process has to be consistent and functioning over a long period if time at the levels of children, supporters, athletes and sports federations – shorter campaigns will probably have greater visibility but the results will not last for long. This commitment is made possible only by

enough financial and organizational support to the anti-doping organization on a long-term basis. I believe in your success.

Alexander Holthoer

Appendix 2

Having visited the laboratory at the Anti-Doping Centre on 24.1.2001 and discussed laboratory issues with both the representatives of the laboratory and the State Commission I hereby would like to comment the following issues and make the following recommendations:

1. The Laboratory has been established in 1971, was IOC accredited in 1980 and passed the IOC reaccreditation procedure 2000 successfully. However the inspection of the essential equipment revealed that many of the chromatographic and mass spectrometric instruments have been in use for 10 years and more. The normal life cycle and the maintenance guarantees are expiring and this makes it necessary to exchange these instruments with new ones. This applies especially to (and could also be regarded as a priority order):

- a) routine GC-MS quadruple systems from Hewlett-Packard (may be substituted by new Agilent 5973 systems), at least two;
- b) a high sensitivity mass spectrometer in order to substitute the very old Finnigan instrument available;
- c) a replacement of the liquid chromatographic system (HP1090), which has no technical support any more from the company;
- d) a new isotope ratio mass spectrometer in order to guarantee the laboratory access to new equipment introduced into doping control.

I might add at this point that the laboratory showed great interest in the ongoing development for a detection method of erythropoietin (EPO). When the method, which was applied during the Olympic Games in Sydney, will be extensively validated, it should be implemented in all IOC accredited laboratories.

2. The organisation of the laboratory should be in a way that it guarantees an independent operation. By independent it is meant that the laboratory scientifically has the full responsibility for the analytical procedures and decision making process and that no unit/person from the outside should interfere with that. On the other hand should the laboratory get no knowledge about the planning and performing of the sample taking procedures. These aspects are important in order to gain full trust on the testing system and to protect the athletes' rights properly. Independence does not apply to the financial support of the laboratory by the State Commission and a proper economic control by the sponsor including an accountable practice by the laboratory. As the ISO standard 17025 demands the collaboration between the laboratory and the State Commission should be based on a proper contract (deliverer of analytical services – client)

3. The contract between the State Commission and the Laboratory should be based on the demand of keeping the IOC accreditation, which includes the ISO 17025 accreditation. On the other hand should the Laboratory be provided with necessary resources in form of personnel and

money. A quality assurance manager has to be appointed according to ISO 17025 and the maintenance of this accreditation costs approximately 5-10% of the total budget.

4. The laboratory would already now (with the present staff and equipment) benefit from an increased number of samples per year (only 1390 for 2000). This would not only use the personnel resources in the lab in a better way, but also improve the Laboratory's scientific experience.

5. Further development of the Laboratory and the maintenance of an analytical excellence require the permanent education of new co-workers and the improvement of the competence of all employees. It is of advantage to have collaboration/connections with similar analytical/scientific institutions (forensic toxicology, analytical pharmacology, endocrinological laboratories) at a University or a scientific unit. In order to keep key persons in the laboratory adequate measures should be taken by the State Committee. This should also include the possibility for key persons to keep good contact to or establish fruitful collaboration with other doping laboratories. Possibilities for the exchange of ideas, presentation of results at conferences/meetings should be provided. I refer at this point to the yearly Workshop for Doping Analysis in Cologne.

In conclusion, the Moscow anti-doping laboratory needs increased support in order to keep and improve the analytical expertise and excellence. Some key aspects are the exchange of necessary equipment, the proper basis for being ISO 17025 accredited, an increased number of analyses performed and the appropriate measures taken in order to develop and maintain competent staff members.

Peter Hemmersbach, Prof. Dr.
Scientific Director
Hormone Laboratory Aker University Hospital
Section for Doping Analysis
Oslo, Norway