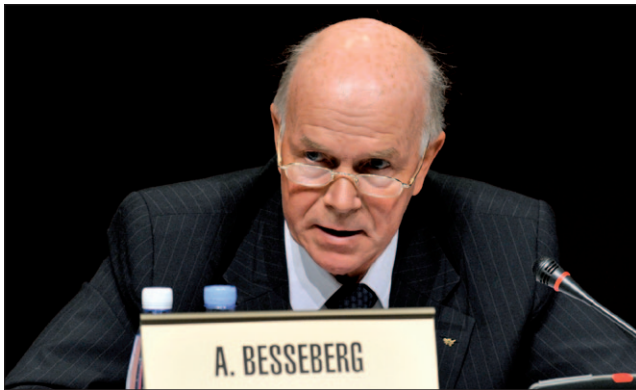




GOOD GOVERNANCE AND ETHICS

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GOOD GOVERNANCE AND ETHICS

Traditionally, the members of the Olympic family have lived their own lives between editions of the Olympic Games. Each one of the family members has tried, on their own, to live up to the ideals of sport, and has probably had their focus on “equal conditions and fair play among all athletes”.

Today, we have to broaden our horizons. It is no longer enough that we have good and fair competition rules and disciplinary rules for the athletes in our own sport. We, the International Sports Federations, have to work together more closely and harmonise our rules as far as possible so that the disciplinary sanctions of athletes are the same for the same offence, be they biathletes, swimmers, football players, etc..

The founding of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) 10 years ago was a first important step towards equal treatment of all athletes who violate anti-doping rules. With the introduction of the new World Anti-Doping Code on 1 January 2009, we are on the right path, but still have to keep working hard to improve further. Is it fair, for example, that if an athlete on a 4x100m relay team tests positive, the whole team is disqualified, while in other team sports, such as hockey or football, a positive test may not lead to the disqualification of the team?

Further, it is important that the rules and our Code of Ethics in sport be in compliance with the standards of the society and community around us. In this area, we took a big step forward with the new 2009 WADA Code. We can now judge anti-doping violations more on a case-by-case basis. This is much more compliant with the general laws where a judge can decide on the penalty within a certain range.

Another ethical problem in sport and sports administration is increasing commercialisation. It is threatening the principle of fair play among all athletes. A victory does not only bring fame and honour, but also monetary freedom or even wealth. Therefore, athletes and even their coaches are tempted by the money, and the principle of fair play is overshadowed by greed.

Commercialisation does not only bring about the danger of athletes using forbidden substances in order to improve their performance. Because of the financial resources at the disposal of the best athletes and the interest of the sports industry, these athletes can compete with advanced technical equipment, which is out of the reach of other athletes.

Such developments are discussed at length, for example by the Fédération Internationale de Natation (FINA), in whose sport the choice of swimsuit, and no longer athletic achievement, determines the best athlete. Is this not a violation of the principle of equal conditions for all athletes? Can we even regulate this without blocking new technical developments for all athletes?

The decision about which swimsuits are allowed for competition is made by the leaders and administrators who try to secure fair conditions for all athletes. The process of commercialisation threatens their fair decisions as well. People, producers, sponsors, different rights-holders and organisers of events are willing to pay a lot of money in order to get what they want, and the danger of corruption is increasing.

Even without doing anything illegal, commercial interests are threatening the transparent and fair election procedures of the host cities and organisers of major events. The applicants offer to pay for the flights, accommodation costs or training camps of the national federations (NFs). Especially during this period of global financial crisis, many federations do not have a lot of money and are willing to support the city or organising committee that offers the cheapest package.

This form of buying votes is not illegal, but I think it is not ethical behaviour. It is harmful to sport because the events often cannot live up to the expectations. Furthermore, bringing athletes to a place that might not offer the best conditions for them is not good governance.

At the moment, sport is very important in society, and most of the time we can enjoy a very good reputation. It is, however, very easy to lose this good reputation. We have seen this in the society around us. Even if there is a Code of Ethics in place, there have been firms and branches of companies, which have got into serious trouble because the Code of Ethics had not been observed.

As society expects ethical behaviour also from us in sport, it will be important to be in compliance with the society and community around us. I think it is necessary for all organisations within the sports community and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to put in place a code of good governance and ethics, which should, as far as possible, be commonly used for all different sports, as has been achieved with the common World Anti-Doping Code. And that code should, as far as possible, be in harmony with similar codes in the rest of the world around us.