Athletics Integrity Unit

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Decision of the Athletics Integrity Unit in the Case of Mr Anouar El Ghouz

Introduction

1. World Athletics has established the Athletics Integrity Unit ("**AIU**") whose role is to protect the integrity of the sport of Athletics, including fulfilling World Athletics' obligations as a Signatory to the World Anti-Doping Code ('the "**Code**"). World Athletics has delegated implementation of the World Athletics Anti-Doping Rules ("**ADR**") to the AIU, including but not limited to the following activities in relation to International-Level Athletes: Testing, Investigations, Results Management, Hearings, Sanctions and Appeals.

2. Mr Anouar El Ghouz ("the **Athlete**") is a 35-year-old road runner from Morrocco.[1]

3. This decision is issued by the AIU pursuant to Rule 8.5.6 ADR, which provides as follows:

> *"8.5.6 In the event that the Athlete or other Person either (i) admits the violation and accepts the proposed Consequences or (ii) is deemed to have admitted the violation and accepted the Consequences as per Rule 8.5.2(f), the Integrity Unit will promptly:*
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> *(a) issue a decision confirming the commission of the violation(s) and the imposition of the specified Consequences (including, if applicable, a justification for why the maximum potential sanction was not imposed);*
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> *(b) Publicly Report that decision in accordance with Rule 14;*
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> *(c) send a copy of the decision to the Athlete or other Person and to any other party that has a right, further to Rule 13, to appeal the decision (and any such party may, within 15 days of receipt, request a copy of the full case file pertaining to the decision)."*

The Athlete's Commission of Anti-Doping Rule Violations

4. Rule 2.3 ADR sets out that the following shall constitute an Anti-Doping Rule Violation:

> *"2.3 Evading, Refusing or Failing to submit to Sample Collection by an Athlete"*

[1] https://worldathletics.org/athletes/morocco/anouar-el-ghouz-14629034

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4.1. On 8 February 2025, Doping Control Personnel were authorised by the AIU (on behalf of World Athletics) to test the Athlete In-Competition at the at the Riyadh Marathon in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (the "**Race**")[2].

4.2. The facts of that Testing attempt, according to the Supplementary Report Form filed by the lead Doping Control Officer ("**DCO**") are in summary, as follows:

4.2.1. The Athlete finished 7th in the Race[3] and the lead DCO, notified the Athlete orally that he was selected for In-Competition Testing at approximately 09:15.

4.2.2. Following verbal notification, the Athlete requested to go to the medical tent, stating that he was tired. The Athlete was escorted there by a chaperone (as per the lead DCO's instructions).

4.2.3. The Athlete remained in the medical tent for about 30 minutes, before he was escorted to the changing room to collect his belongings, and then to the Doping Control Station ("**DCS**") where he arrived at around 10:00.

4.2.4. Once all selected athletes were at the DCS, twelve (12) athletes left to attend the medal ceremony. In the waiting room of the DCS, the lead DCO informed the remaining ten (10) athletes, including the Athlete, that they could relax as most of them would need to provide blood samples, and sample collection would not take place until at least two hours after the Race.

4.2.5. At this point, the Athlete said to the lead DCO that he did not want to provide a blood sample, claiming that he was tired and that he would only provide a urine sample.

4.2.6. The lead DCO explained to the Athlete that it was for the AIU to decide which type of samples were to be collected. The DCO reminded the Athlete that, if he refused to provide a sample, it would be documented, and it could result in a serious sanction being imposed.

4.2.7. The Athlete maintained that he would not provide a blood sample and that he understood the rules.

4.2.8. The DCO told the Athlete that he would need to document his refusal to provide a sample and that he should wait in the DCS whilst he went check the Mission Order to confirm which samples the Athlete was required to provide. The DCO left the DCS, and the Athlete was kept under observation in the DCS by two (2) chaperones.

4.2.9. At or around 10:22, the DCO was informed that the Athlete had left the DCS. A Chaperone reported to the DCO that the Athlete had left whilst he appeared to be taking a phone call. The Athlete was kept under observation by one of the

[2] The Riyadh Marathon is a World Athletics Elite label road race.

[3] https://worldathletics.org/competition/calendar-results/results/7220687?eventId=10229634

chaperones and eventually returned to the DCS. However, the Athlete then left the DCS a second time very quickly and the chaperone was unable to follow him on the second occasion.

4.2.10. The lead DCO, along with a chaperone, immediately attempted to locate the Athlete, checking the medical tent and adjacent rooms, but could not find him.

4.2.11. At the request of the DCO, the Director Elite Manager for the Race, contacted the Athlete's manager, via WhatsApp to inform him of the situation. The Manager responded that he had tried to call the Athlete but that there was no answer.

4.2.12. Another DCO, went to the hotel where the Athlete had been staying (the "**Hotel**") to try to locate the Athlete but was unable to do so. According to information provided by the Hotel's administration, the Athlete did not return to check out of the Hotel and had left some of his belongings in his room.

4.2.13. Later the same day, the DCO unexpectedly encountered the Athlete at the terminal of Riyadh airport at around 20:15. After initially denying that he was the Athlete, he alleged that he knew that a blood test had not been mandated by the AIU because *'they were sending people from Switzerland to take the blood samples*'. The Athlete told the DCO that he had left the DCS because he had been informed of a family emergency.

4.2.14. The DCO confirmed to the Athlete that he was required to carry out testing (including blood testing) by the AIU and asked the Athlete to provide a signed, written explanation for his departure from the DCS without submitting to sample collection, but the Athlete refused.

4.2.15. No sample was ultimately collected from the Athlete on 8 February 2025 after he was notified.

4.3. The AIU reviewed the above circumstances, in accordance with Article 5 and Annex A of the International Standard for Results Management ("**ISRM**") and determined that the above information (the "**Evasion incident**") constituted evidence of potential Anti-Doping Rule Violations pursuant to Rule 2.3 ADR committed by the Athlete.

4.4. On 7 March 2025, the AIU therefore issued the Athlete with a Notice of Allegation of potential Anti-Doping Rule Violations pursuant to Rule 2.3 ADR (Evading, Refusing or failing to Submit to Sample Collection by an Athlete) and, *inter alia,* gave him until 17 March 2025 to provide a written explanation for the Anti-Doping Rule Violations alleged against him.

4.5. On 13 March 2025, the Athlete provided a written explanation in response to the AIU's Notice of Allegation, which is summarised below:

4.5.1. After the Race, he felt dizzy and extremely tired and was taken to the medical tent, where he remained for about 20 minutes until he felt better;

4.5.2. He then went to the changing room where he remained for a long time;

4.5.3. While in the changing room, he received a call informing him that his wife had been in a car accident in Dubai where he lives;

4.5.4. He immediately took his belongings and left to go home. He informed his coach of the situation and asked him to let his manager know so he could tell the Race organizers not to wait for him to take the bus;

4.5.5. He denied being notified that he was required to provide a Sample after the Race or that he went to the DCS. He alleged that the DCO had made a mistake and was now trying to blame him for it; and

4.5.6. He was previously tested following the 2024 Riyadh Marathon on 10 February 2024 and the Guangzhou Huangpu Marathon in China on 22 December 2024 and, alleged that *'things did not happen this way'*.

4.6. On 9 April 2025, the Athlete attended an interview (the "**Interview**") with AIU representatives and provided further information (as summarized below):

4.6.1. He received the call from his wife regarding the accident at around 10:00-10:05;

4.6.2. In relation to the accident, he said that his wife was crossing a street inside the compound where they live in Dubai and was hit by an unidentified car. An ambulance came but told her she did not need to go to the hospital as nothing was broken. The Athlete's wife then preferred to return to their residence as she is a shy housewife. He stated that his wife did not know who drove the car, no report was made to the police and there was no paperwork associated with the ambulance (as they were not invoiced for the ambulance dispatch).

4.6.3. Following his wife's call, the Athlete asked his coach to book him on an earlier flight and to inform his manager of the situation. He then took a taxi directly to the Airport[4] and took a flight for Dubai which departed at around 15:00.

4.6.4. He did not meet the DCO at the Airport.

4.6.5. The next day, the Athlete went to the hospital with his wife as she was experiencing some swelling in her knee.

4.6.6. He alleged that the DCO had fabricated the entire story.

4.7. On 11 April 2025, following the Interview and upon the AIU's request to provide corroborating evidence for the above explanation, the Athlete provided the following documents[5]:

4.7.1. A Medical Certificate related to his wife's hospital visit the day after the incident (i.e. 9 February 2025). This document stated that she attended complaining of

[4] He did not return to the Hotel.

[5] He also confirmed the name and contact details of his coach and his manager.

"*severe knee pain, swelling and inability to walk for one day duration*" but makes no reference to any accident or physical trauma, but rather a diagnosis of arthritis of the knee joint;

4.7.2. The Athlete's original flight ticket to Dubai leaving Riyadh on 9 February 2025 at 01:55am.

4.7.3. A photo of what is presented as (part of) a page of the Athlete's passport showing his passport stamps, none of which were relevant to his departure from Riyadh to Dubai on 8 or 9 February 2025.

4.8. The AIU asked the Athlete to provide his flight ticket/booking for the flight he claimed to have taken at around 15:00 on 8 February 2025. In response on 17 April 2025, the Athlete wrote to the AIU that: "*These are all the documents I have. As for the ticket, I spoke with my coach. He called the airline office several times for days, but no one answered the calls. […]*"[6]

4.9. On 4 June 2025, following several requests from the AIU, the Athlete's coach replied to the AIU's queries regarding the flight at 15.00 on 8 February 2025 that the Athlete claimed he booked for him as follows:

> "*I am a 55-year-old man and since 2017, I have been buying plane tickets more than 6 times a year for Mr. Anouar el Ghouz from different travel agencies in different cities of the emirate (Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Fujairah), I don't remember where I bought this ticket, the city of Fujairah is big and it is not my home city to know these boulevards and streets well and I often got lost in them and this happened to me last week …. I have never kept invoices or agency tickets or one of the single-use papers and I do not save anything in my phone. Even Anouar el Ghouz's passport is not registered. He sends it to me every time I have to make a purchase. As my phone is always within reach of my family and my daughter uses it often and to avoid family problems the messages are deleted on days, so that my family does not know anything about my work and my friends and my bank account……it's my style that makes my life easy. Sorry.*"

4.10. On 1 July 2025, the AIU asked the Athlete to contact the relevant airline and request a copy of his flight booking and boarding pass for his flight scheduled at or around 15:00 from Riyadh to Dubai on 8 February 2025.

4.11. On 2 July 2025, the Athlete wrote to the airline as per the AIU request above.

4.12. On 6 July 2025, the airline replied to the Athlete asking him to provide "*the booking reference, or the contact number that was added upon booking, or any other related details*" to be able to assist him further.[7]

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[6] The Athlete provided screenshots of a phone log showing calls to a Dubai number linked to the airline offices in Dubai.

[7] The AIU also contacted the airline and received a response within 48 hours indicating that booking information could be provided to passengers upon request.

4.13. On 7 July 2025, the Athlete replied to the airline stating that he did not have any information related to the booking, which had been made by his coach through a travel agency.

4.14. On 8 July 2025, the Athlete forwarded to the AIU a "Resolution Notice" email from the airline which stated that a resolution was provided for his case. The email included the following "*Close Comments: there is no booking reference to assist you*".

4.15. On 9 July 2025, the Athlete confirmed that the "Resolution Notice" email was all that he had received from the airline.

4.16. The AIU notes that there are several inconsistencies in the Athlete's evidence, and considers that his version of events lacks credibility, in particular:

4.16.1. The Athlete has been unable to provide any evidence to corroborate his version of events: there are no phone records of the alleged call from his wife on 8 February 2025, there is no evidence of his wife's alleged accident on 8 February 2025[8] and no flight ticket/booking (or any other contemporaneous document) corroborating his claim that he took a flight from Riyadh at around 15:00 on 8 February 2025.

4.16.2. While the Athlete says that he and his coach were unable to recover the information related to his flight, the airline separately confirmed to the AIU that this information can be provided to their passengers upon request. The AIU notes that the email from the airline to the Athlete stated, "*Close Comments: there is no booking reference to assist you*".

4.16.3. Whereas the Athlete says that he took a flight at around 15:00 on 8 February 2025 and never met the DCO, the DCO provided video and photo evidence confirming his interaction with the Athlete at Riyadh airport on the evening of 8 February 2025 (after 20:00).

4.17. Therefore, on 9 September 2025, the AIU issued the Athlete with a Notice of Charge in accordance with Rule 8.5.1 ADR and Article 7.1 ISRM confirming that he was being charged with Anti-Doping Rule Violations under Rule 2.3 ADR ("the **Charge**") and invited him to confirm how he would like to proceed with the Charge by no later than 23 September 2025.

4.18. On 21 September 2025, the Athlete, via his legal counsel, confirmed that he had decided to admit the Anti-Doping Rule Violation[9]. On 28 September 2025, the AIU received an Admission of Anti-Doping Rule Violation and Acceptance of Consequences Form signed by the Athlete.

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[8] Open-source searches revealed that the Athlete's wife is a road runner, who competed and won a 5km road race on 15 February 2025, seven (7) days after her alleged accident.

[9] On 23 September 2025, the Athlete provided a detailed admission in which he accepted *inter alia* that (i) he had been notified that he was selected to doping control, (ii) he had been escorted to the DCS and (iii) he had left the DCS without providing a sample.

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Consequences

5. This is the Athlete's first Anti-Doping Rule Violation.

6. Rule 10.3 ADR specifies that the period of Ineligibility for an Anti-Doping Rule Violation under Rule 2.3 ADR shall be as follows:

> *"10.3.1 For violations of Rule 2.3 or Rule 2.5, the period of Ineligibility will be four (4) years except: (i) in the case of failing to submit to Sample collection, if the Athlete can establish that the commission of the anti-doping rule violation was not intentional, the period of Ineligibility will be two (2) years; (ii) in all other cases, if the Athlete or other Person can establish exceptional circumstances that justify a reduction of the period of Ineligibility, the period of Ineligibility will be in a range from two (2) years to four (4) years depending on the Athlete's or other Person's degree of Fault; or (iii) in a case involving a Protected Person or Recreational Athlete, the period of Ineligibility will be in a range between a maximum of two (2) years and, at a minimum, a reprimand and no period of Ineligibility, depending on the Protected Person or Recreational Athlete's degree of Fault."*

7. The period of Ineligibility to be imposed for Evading/Refusing Sample Collection is therefore a period of Ineligibility of four (4) years, unless the Athlete can establish exceptional circumstances that justify a reduction of the period of Ineligibility.

8. The Athlete has not established exceptional circumstances to justify a reduction of the period of Ineligibility. Therefore, the mandatory period of Ineligibility is a period of Ineligibility of four (4) years.

9. However, Rule 10.4 ADR specifies that the period of Ineligibility for an Anti-Doping Rule Violation may be greater than the standard sanction when it is established that Aggravating Circumstances are present:

> *"10.4 Aggravating Circumstances that may increase the period of Ineligibility*
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> *If the Integrity Unit or other prosecuting authority establishes in an individual case involving an anti-doping rule violation [...] that Aggravating Circumstances are present which justify the imposition of a period of Ineligibility greater than the standard sanction, then the period of Ineligibility otherwise applicable will be increased by an additional period of Ineligibility of up to two (2) years depending on the seriousness of the violation and the nature of the Aggravating Circumstances, unless the Athlete or other Person can establish that they did not knowingly commit the anti-doping rule violation."*

10. Aggravating Circumstances are defined in the ADR as follows:

> "***Aggravating Circumstances:*** *Circumstances involving, or actions by, an Athlete or other Person which may justify the imposition of a period of Ineligibility greater than the standard sanction. Such circumstances and actions shall include, but are not limited to: the Athlete or other Person Used or Possessed multiple Prohibited Substances or Prohibited Methods, Used or Possessed a Prohibited Substance or Prohibited Method on multiple occasions or committed multiple other anti-doping rule violations; a normal individual would be likely to enjoy the performance-enhancing effects of the anti-doping rule violation(s) beyond the otherwise applicable period of Ineligibility; the Athlete or Person engaged in deceptive or obstructive conduct to avoid the detection or adjudication of an anti-doping rule violation; or the Athlete or other Person engaged in Tampering during Results Management. For the avoidance of doubt, the examples of circumstances and conduct described herein are not exclusive and other similar circumstances or conduct may also justify the imposition of a longer period of Ineligibility.*"

11. The AIU considers that the Athlete "*engaged in deceptive or obstructive conduct to avoid the … adjudication of an anti-doping rule violation*" by providing misleading or plainly false answers to the AIU in writing and during the Interview.

12. The Athlete has failed to establish that he did not knowingly commit the Anti-Doping Rule Violations. Furthermore, it is the AIU's position that the nature and seriousness of the Aggravating Circumstances in this case warrant the imposition of an additional one (1) year to the period of Ineligibility. i.e., a total of five (5) years.

13. However, Rule 10.8.1 ADR provides that an athlete potentially subject to an asserted period of Ineligibility of four (4) years or more may benefit from a one (1)-year reduction in the period of Ineligibility based on an early admission and acceptance of sanction:

> *"10.8.1 One year reduction for certain anti-doping rule violations based on early admission and acceptance of sanction.*
>
> *Where the Integrity Unit notifies an Athlete or other Person of an anti-doping rule violation charge that carries an asserted period of Ineligibility of four (4) or more years (including any period of Ineligibility asserted under Rule 10.4), if the Athlete or other Person admits the violation and accepts the asserted period of Ineligibility no later than 20 days after receiving the Notice of Charge, the Athlete or other Person may receive a one (1) year reduction in the period of Ineligibility asserted by the Integrity Unit. Where the Athlete or other Person receives the one (1) year reduction in the asserted period of Ineligibility under this Rule 10.8.1, no further reduction in the asserted period of Ineligibility will be allowed under any other Rule."*

14. A Notice of Charge was issued to the Athlete on 9 September 2025. On 28 September 2025, the AIU received an Admission of an Anti-Doping Rule Violations and Acceptance of

Consequences Form signed by the Athlete confirming that he admitted the Anti-Doping Rule Violations and accepted the asserted period of Ineligibility of five (5) years.

15. The Athlete shall therefore receive a one (1) year reduction in the asserted period of Ineligibility pursuant to Rule 10.8.1 ADR based on an early admission and acceptance of sanction.

16. On the basis that the Athlete has admitted the Anti-Doping Rule Violation under Rule 2.3 ADR, in accordance with Rule 10.3.1 ADR and Rule 10.4 ADR and the application of Rule 10.8.1 ADR, the AIU confirms by this decision the following Consequences for a first Anti-Doping Rule Violation:

    16.1. a period of Ineligibility of four (4) years commencing on 9 September 2025 (the date of Provisional Suspension); and

    16.2. disqualification of the Athlete's results on and since 8 February 2025, with all resulting Consequences, including the forfeiture of any medals, titles, awards, points, prizes, prize money and appearance money.

17. The Athlete has accepted the above Consequences for his Anti-Doping Rule Violation and has expressly waived his right to have those Consequences determined by the Disciplinary Tribunal at a hearing.

Publication

18. In accordance with Rule 8.5.6(b) ADR, the AIU shall publicly report this decision on the AIU's website.

Rights of Appeal

19. This decision constitutes the final decision of the AIU pursuant to Rule 8.5.6 ADR.

20. Further to Rule 13.2.3 ADR, WADA and the Agence marocaine antidopage ("**AMAD**") have a right of appeal against this decision to the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne, Switzerland, in accordance with the procedure set out at Rule 13.6.1 ADR.

21. If an appeal is filed against this decision by WADA or AMAD, the Athlete will be entitled to exercise his right of cross-appeal in accordance with Rule 13.2.4 ADR.

Monaco, 6 October 2025