

Howman: Elite Dopers Evading Ineffective, Stalled Anti-Doping

12 DECEMBER 2025, MONACO: The Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) Chair David Howman has declared the global anti-doping system has “stalled”.

Addressing the 2025 World Conference on Doping in Sport last week in Busan, Korea, the experienced administrator assessed the current situation candidly, stating “Let’s be honest and pragmatic...intentional dopers at elite level are evading detection. We are not effective enough nowadays in catching cheats. We have great education programmes which help but they don’t impact the intentional rule-breakers in elite sport”.

“Our ineffectiveness in dealing with those who are beating the rules is hurting the anti-doping movement’s credibility, with the resulting risk that our clean-sport message falls on deaf ears,” he said, delivering the AIU’s Intervention.

He conceded that even the AIU, despite priding itself on its “demonstrated ability to catch elite athletes who are cheating, (is) not catching enough of them and significant improvements are necessary”.



AIU Chair David Howman (right) and AIU Head Brett Clothier are pictured at last week’s 2025 World Conference on Doping in Sport in Busan, Korea. (Photo credit: WADA)

Howman who spent 13 years as Director General of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), urged the anti-doping community to “move beyond compliance to a system that supports effective, ambitious anti-doping efforts”.

Querying if there can be collaboration across sporting disciplines to unearth the best science, best data, and best testing, he suggested Anti-Doping Organisations (ADOs) be supported with the best investigative and scientific tools – and incentivised to succeed – while also being properly motivated to pursue anti-doping excellence.

“A renewed focus on scientific research with closer alignment between WADA and cutting-edge ADOs on research priorities and opportunities would be beneficial. The International Standards might be better scrutinized regularly to ensure they fully support investigative efforts to uncover doping,” elaborated the AIU Chair.

Championing anti-doping excellence rather than compliance-based testing, Howman asserted the latter holds little hope of “catching sophisticated dopers”. He called for “greater transparency on anti-doping data” and proactivity by WADA in “promoting the pursuit of anti-doping excellence”.

In closing, he cited the AIU's mantra – 'the right test, the right athlete, the right time' – and stressed the organisation's adherence to intelligence-led, targeted anti-doping work.

"We recommend this approach and are happy to knowledge-share," he said, adding "we all want a cleaner sports landscape".

"We must all do better to support our clean athletes by catching the dirty ones, especially those at the pinnacle of sport.

"Let's resolve to strengthen our anti-doping system as we strive for cleaner, fairer and more credible sport!"

AIU INTERVENTION

ABOUT THE ATHLETICS INTEGRITY UNIT

Link: [HTTPS://WWW.ATHLETICSINTEGRITY.ORG](https://www.athleticsintegrity.org)

The Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) is the independent body created by the World Athletics that manages all integrity issues – both doping and non-doping – for the sport of athletics. The remit of the AIU includes anti-doping, the pursuit of individuals engaged in age or competition results manipulation, investigating fraudulent behaviour with regards to transfers of allegiance, and detecting other misconduct including bribery and breaches of betting rules. It is the AIU's role to drive cheats out of our sport, and to do everything within its power to support honest athletes around the world who dedicate their lives to reaching their sporting goals through dedication and hard work.



ATHLETICS INTEGRITY UNIT

E: media@athleticsintegrity.org

Athletics Integrity Unit, 1st Floor, 6 Quai Antoine 1er, MC 98007 Monaco