

## **We Have Had Enough Nonsense! Teaming Up and Leveraging Collective Action to Keep Corruption and Criminality Out of Sport**

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Thank you for the invitation to provide a message this week during SIGA's Expert Summit on Global Leadership and Anti-Corruption in Sport.

First, let me thank my good friend Emanuel Macedo de Medeiros, SIGA's Global CEO, for his extraordinary leadership over the years in helping get SIGA off the ground and growing it to become a most influential voice on sport integrity.

Let me also thank the Government of Azores for hosting this important event and all participating Portuguese and International partners for their energies and effective diplomacy in bringing more critical stakeholders to join the SIGA Network to drive corruption out of sport.

In the spirit of your upcoming high-level panel session, "How Deep Goes the Rabbit Hole?", I like to think that we have all "had enough nonsense" of the levels of corruption and malfeasance over the years.

Indeed, enough is enough!

Today we must learn from the past as an opportunity to help clean up sport as we build stronger integrity and governance frameworks to keep corruption and organized crime out of sport and restore the reputation of beloved national pastimes.

In too many parts of the world, we continue to see the integrity of sports being besmirched by the influence of corrupt public officials, felonious misbehaviors by management, coaches, trainers and athletes, and infiltration of organized crime into teams, leagues, and federations.

Your Summit is especially timely given the current FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and International Anti-Corruption Day this week and the opportunity to remind communities that we must redouble our efforts to combat corruption and other malfeasance and criminality in other sports.

From bribery scandals related to the awarding the FIFA games in Russia (2018) and Qatar (2022) to criminal assaults, money laundering, tax evasion, and trafficking crimes around the world, the abuse in sports by corrupt actors and threat networks imperils its ethical core.

The penetration and involvement of organized crime in sports has further impugned the integrity of the sport industry.

Organized crime networks across the underworld are rapacious in not only diversifying their dirty money through re-investments in sports, but also pushing narcotics, steroids, illegal chemicals used in doping, racketeering, game fixing, fraud and other illicit activities as a source of greater profits.

Through their illicit wealth they also engage in bribery and blackmail that enables them to continue to exploit compromised officials and penetrate the sport sector.

For example, while the global betting market across all sports is estimated at \$2 trillion per year, EUROPOL has reported that organized crime manipulates sports competitions when they bribe players to facilitate betting-related match-fixing at an estimated €120 million per year.

On-line sport betting is very profitable for organized crime in Europe, China and throughout the world, including related to the English Premier League, Spain's La Liga, Italy's Serie A, Ligue 1 in France, and other European leagues. Across Southeast Asia, illegal sports betting has stayed quite hot during the 2022 FIFA Cup games especially through remote gambling services.

On-line betting and e-sports tied to organized crime have been accelerating through globalization and technological advances that have spawned both legal and illegal activities across sports.

This is particularly true during the current pandemic which has accelerated many of these on-line crimes as more people have stayed home during lockdowns, making it much easier for criminal networks to exploit the sector for illicit profits.

Cybercrime and cyberattacks will also become bigger threats in the future, including identity theft and consumer fraud at global sporting events.

On other fronts, FIFA itself has expressed concerns about the growing influence of the Italian mafia and other criminal syndicates scoring a significant portion of this illicit wealth.

In some cases, kleptocrats and oligarchs who have an affinity for sports launder billions of dollars of looted assets either by purchasing sports teams or through investments related to the sport and hospitality sectors.

Human trafficking and forced labor are also a challenge.

For example, unscrupulous criminal agents travel across Africa and the developing world, conning families and children living in poverty and desperate to better their lives.

It is reported that many children are recruited into “sport academies”, but are actually quickly enslaved or trafficked once they arrive in Europe, Asia, or the United States.

Here in the United States, the U.S. Department of Justice in recent years has prosecuted retired athletes from the NFL and NBA who sought to defraud and scam their healthcare funds through false claims for reimbursement of medical expenses or medical equipment that they did not pay for or receive. DOJ has also prosecuted numerous cases of game fixing in college basketball.

According to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), soccer and other sports are viewed as ideal vehicles for money laundering by criminals, including transactions related to sports-betting.

Make no mistake: Dirty money emanating from corruption and criminality in sport finances and facilitates other illicit activities, and further rots the integrity of the sport.

Given the breadth and scale of today’s ills in sport, the need for global leadership is greater than ever.

We can no longer turn a blind eye.

This is why SIGA matters and can play a vital role to inject much needed honesty and truth into the dark side of sports.

I stand with SIGA and support their Universal Standards, Sport Integrity Goals, and innovative SIGA Independent Rating and Verification System (SIRVS) to anchor greater accountability across the sporting industry.

We must not turn away from the hard work of maintaining legal and higher moral standards off the field.

If we don’t challenge ourselves, it is more difficult to transform ethical behaviors.

I would have loved to have seen more public awareness during the current FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 on the breadth and scale of today’s harms caused by corruption and organized crime in sport.

Sports washing cannot be the solution.

Finally, we must also dis-incentivize criminals and corrupt officials by red carding them, putting them behind bars, seizing their criminally-derived assets, and sending a strong message that crime does not pay.

If we are to make progress, real leadership, at all levels, entails owning the issue and stepping onto the pitch to tackle these threats directly, forcibly, and credibly with result-oriented actions.

This is the essence of the vital virtues in sport: responsibility, honesty, integrity, and respect.

In joining forces, we can do more together as a team to realize our winning goal and score a brighter future for sport on and off the field.

ICAIE looks forward to teaming up and working with SIGA and partners to foster dynamic public-private partnerships to keep corruption and criminality out of sport.

Thank you.