Speech
by State Secretary Cornelia Rogall-Grothe
for the conference “Play the Game 2011”
(German Sport University Cologne, 4 October 2011, 10:35 – 10:45)

Professor Tokarski,
Mr Sejer Andersen,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Federal Government, I would like to welcome you all to the Play the Game Conference 2011. I am delighted that the Play the Game organization and the German Sport University Cologne have been able to bring together such an impressive array of international experts and practitioners – some of you from very far away – here in this city of sport, Cologne. I would also like to thank you for this opportunity to present the position of the Federal Ministry of the Interior concerning some of the themes of this conference.

I would like to start with the current issue on the agenda, namely whether mega sport events benefit the public good:

Major sport events may have various positive effects for the host region. These may include greater interest in sport, an improved image for the host region, a boost to the local economy and upgrades to infrastructure. This is why, based on our good experience with the 2006 football World Cup, which is remembered not only in Germany, the Federal Government lent its strong support to Munich’s bid to host the Winter Olympics and Paralympics in 2018.

However, major sport events benefit the public good only when they are based on careful and well-thought-out environmental and sustainability planning. It does not make much sense to build oversized sport facilities which, due to conditions in the host country, will never be able to be fully used or maintained after the event. This is especially problematic when the cost of building infrastructure exceeds the economic capacities of a region, thus leading to major public debt and the inability to make needed investments in other areas of importance to society.

Some countries which have a long tradition of enthusiasm for sport are nonetheless unable, for reasons specific to the country, to find subsequent uses for large-scale
sport facilities or other infrastructure which make economic sense. In the interest of sport, such countries should have a realistic chance at hosting important sport events, in order to use this opportunity for sustainable public development. So it would be welcome if the international sport federations would revise the hosting requirements accordingly, for example concerning spectator capacity of sport venues. It is not absolutely necessary for each host country of a certain sport event to match or outdo the previous host or to set ever-higher standards. This is an area where not only the host regions, but also the international sport organizations, are called on to act.

Now I would like to address another key issue of this conference, namely corruption in sport. There are several sides to this phenomenon:

First of all, match- or game-fixing related to gambling. Such manipulation endangers public trust in the integrity of sport and the openness of competition results. So we welcome the fact that the IOC this year founded a working group on this issue, in which our ministry is also represented. Our support for this working group includes seconding an expert from the Bochum criminal investigations department, which has a great deal of experience in this area of organized crime from its investigation of the match-fixing scandal which went to court in Bochum. I hope very much that the IOC working group will give a significant boost to dealing with this issue, especially with regard to cooperation between the various actors.

The issue of match-fixing plays an important role in the European institutions as well. This is why a few days ago the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers adopted recommendations on promoting the integrity of sport against manipulation of results. This issue is also one of the sport policy priorities of the Polish EU Council Presidency and will be discussed at the informal meeting of EU sport ministers in Cracow next week.

The main thing will be to coordinate these different activities.

Just as important as tackling match-fixing, however, is rigorous action on suspected corruption. The sport federations are at just as much risk as other – public or private – institutions, wherever decisions with a major economic impact are made. They must take responsibility here and demonstrate that, within the framework of the autonomy they claim, they are able to fight corruption. Tackling the risk of corruption requires unambiguous rules, high standards and the willingness to apply them in practice (keyword: compliance). And this in turn requires effective monitoring
mechanisms. Further, federation structures must be examined with an eye to their susceptibility to corruption. The smaller the body responsible for making decisions with a significant impact, the greater the risk of corruption. It all comes down to a willingness to create transparency. Cases of suspected corruption are not merely an internal matter of the sport organizations. When governments provide all manner of support to sport because of the social values it embodies, then organized sport in turn must live up to its function as a role model.

Our ministry is also represented in the expert group “Good Governance in Sport” set up under the EU Work Plan for Sport, which will also concentrate on the issue of transparency.

The third conference theme I would like to address here is the fight against doping. The Federal Government gives very high priority to the fight against doping, and we are committed to helping organized sport in its efforts to this end. Regardless of our partnership with the sport organizations, however, we do not hesitate to use the necessary pressure to ensure compliance with high standards.

At our initiative, the first European Monitoring Centre for early detection of methods and medications with the potential for doping misuse was recently set up at the Centre for Preventive Doping Research of the German Sport University Cologne. The Monitoring Centre is supposed to work with WADA to gain information at the earliest possible stage when the pharmaceutical industry is developing new medications with relevance for doping. In this way, procedures for detecting doping violators can be developed even before these medications are brought to market, and WADA can decide whether to add the new medication to its list of prohibited substances. This is the key to successful doping prevention in the future.

The Monitoring Centre has already succeeded in gaining the cooperation of several major pharmaceutical companies as well as information about new substances relevant for doping and new developments in veterinary medicine.

The themes I have just mentioned represent many of the challenges facing sport today. So it is all the more important that the initiative Play the Game and the German Sport University Cologne are offering international experts and practitioners from a variety of fields and backgrounds a forum for conducting intensive debate and presenting possible solutions.

I hope you have interesting presentations and productive discussions today and throughout the conference. Take advantage of this excellent opportunity to make new international contacts.
Thank you for your attention, and I hope you enjoy your time here in Cologne!