



SA professor quits IAAF on principle

Protest over athletics body's stance on Semenya

Ockert de Villiers

SOUTH African law professor Steve Cornelius has joined a growing chorus condemning the IAAF's controversial female classification rules by resigning from the international athletics body's disciplinary tribunal.

The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) has introduced a new policy attempting to regulate women who naturally produce testosterone levels above five nanomoles per litre. For now, the regulations are limited to athletes who compete in events ranging from the 400m to the mile. In a hard-hitting letter to IAAF president Sebastian Coe, Cornelius hits out against the "antiquated views of the old scandal-hit IAAF".

"On deep moral grounds, I cannot see myself part of a system in which I may be called upon to apply regulations which I deem to be fundamentally flawed and most likely unlawful in various jurisdictions around the globe," wrote Cornelius, who is a professor at the Tuks Law Faculty.

"It would also be unethical for me to devote time and energy to expose the warped ideology behind the new regu-



Professor Steve Cornelius

lations while serving on the disciplinary tribunal."

It is not the first time that Cornelius objected to the IAAF's view on hyperandrogenism where he pointed out the double standards of such regulations in a law journal in 2016. He wrote that while the IAAF was trying to protect women from having to compete against women with hormonal advantages there was no similar policy to protect men competing against other men with elevated levels of testosterone.

"Men, on the other hand, are presumably strong and do not require protection.

The IAAF embarked on a slippery slope of bigotry, sexism and racism. They are seeking to defend the indefensible," he wrote in the Global Sports Law and Taxation Reports (GSLTR) journal.

"Whether a female athlete may or may not have an unfair competitive advantage over other female athletes merely because she has elevated natural levels of testosterone is just as relevant as whether a male athlete with elevated levels of testosterone has an unfair competitive advantage over other male athletes."

Cornelius, who was appointed to the inaugural IAAF disciplinary tribunal last year, wrote in his resignation letter he could not in good conscience associate himself with "an organisation which insists on ostracising certain individuals".

"I am confident that history will judge you and the members of the IAAF council harshly for going down this route," Cornelius wrote.

"I can only do what my own conscience directs, but I do hope that there are others who are in some way involved with the IAAF and who have the courage of their convictions to take a strong stand against this injustice which the IAAF will perpetrate against certain female athletes."

