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THE WAY FORWARD FOR SA SPORT

SASCOC President Gideon Sam on Tuesday outlined the next steps forward for South African sport with the Olympics Games in London just a year away.

The President of South Africa's Olympic governing body, Sam was speaking at a joint media briefing with Minister of Sport Mr Fikile Mbalula at Olympic House in Johannesburg.

"Now, more than ever we need to present a unified front for South African sport," said Sam. "Our sport needs all the assistance we can get and it's really exciting to have Minister Mbalula and his department right behind us in this regard."

"The Minister really wants to take a hands-on approach in this regard and I think we should join hands and show a unified front as we head for 2012 and beyond. It makes sense for all concerned to be in alignment with the route we're taking."

In his update Sam said there will be an increased focus on SASCOC's Operation Excellence programme (OPEX) ahead of the Olympics. This programme provides for unprecedented financial and coaching support for the country's Olympic hopefuls. (See full OPEX squad elsewhere in the media pack)

"We don't want to leave anything to chance when it comes to team selection," said Sam. "Come November this year and we will know who has qualified, in line with most of the world qualification events taking place this year. Some events will still take place early next year so some athletes will still be eligible to qualify."

"We at SASCOC are hoping to finalise the entire team by no later than 30 June 2012. We will also be identifying a core group of people comprising coaches and



sports science support personnel who will advise SASCOG on progress and will closely monitor the athletes."

The OPEX programme has relieved the financial burden on the national federations under SASCOG's umbrella and allowed them to focus on the next tier of athletes that need support. Most of the athletes that won medals at last year's Commonwealth Games were part of the programme and also managed to get to attend international camps and have access to sporting equipment which they would otherwise not have managed if they were not on the programme.

Sam also referred to the various sporting support systems. "I'm referring here to the programmes guided by the CSIR, our technology partner, our own support programme under the leadership of Jace Naidoo and covering key areas such as nutrition, psychology, strength and conditioning. We'll be rolling these out in 2011 through to 2012."

The year of 2011 will see more focus on the six-point plan of SRSA, namely transformation, funding, mass participation, recreation, youth camps and school sport. "Naturally our programming must align with these six points of the department," said Sam.

"What we also want to do is draw those people close to our young sportsmen and women (like parents and coaches etc) even closer to the whole process so that they get an understanding of how the whole thing works."

It's going to be another busy year for South African sport. "Among our major projects this year will be the 123rd IOC Session in Durban where the host city of the 2018 Winter Olympics will be unveiled. We hosted a very successful 7th IOC Conference on Education, Sport and Culture in Durban last year, proof that South African continue to show their ability to stage major sporting occasions.

"Then there's the All Africa Games (Africa's own Olympics) in Maputo,



road to
LONDON
2012

Mozambique later in the year and also the Commonwealth Youth Games in the Isle of Man. At the same time athletics and swimming have their World Championships which will also give us an indication of how are stars are shaping up for 2012."

Sam also said he was sticking to his goal of 12 medals in 2012. "I have every faith that a country the size of South Africa is capable of getting 12 medals. We take our role of preparing and presenting our teams for all major competitions extremely seriously and everyone concerned with these tasks know exactly what their roles are in this regard."

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