

The National Sports Policy is one step closer to reality as the consultations have been completed and the document has been submitted to Cabinet for approval.

The Department of Sports in the Office of the Prime Minister reviewed the Green Paper for the revised Policy which was tabled in Parliament in November 2012.

Speaking with **JIS News**, Minister with responsibility for Sports, Hon. Natalie Neita-Headley, said the department was determined to complete the policy, which would reflect and provide a framework for sports development going into the next decade.

“We have successfully completed the White Paper, which has now been submitted to Cabinet for final approval before it goes to Parliament. Following its approval by Parliament, it will become the Sports Policy of the country,” the Minister said.

She said that some of the views obtained from representatives of community and sporting groups at the national consultations have been included in the policy. Consultations on the Green Paper, held islandwide, were conducted in two phases. The first phase involved 20 of the national sports associations, while in the second phase,

11 consultations were held with various stakeholders, including four regional consultations in Ocho Rios, Montego Bay, Mandeville and Kingston.

During this year, Minister Neita-Headley said the Department of Sports will focus on the implementation of the policy. “We will look at a practical implementation programme, which will ensure and drive the policy development process,” she explained.

Additionally, she said the department will focus on the development of sports infrastructure, the advancement of sports programmes and several disciplines that have received little attention over the years. She added that a strategy will be developed to broaden the sporting programmes in preparation for the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

“We have been dominant in the areas of track and field over many years, but we have not done so well in the other areas, not because we do not possess the talent, but certainly because we have not given it the focus required, and the necessary infrastructure and resources have not been placed in some of these areas,” she pointed out.

She cited cycling, table tennis, basketball and *taekwondo* as some disciplines to receive attention this year. She added that swimming will also be given much attention, and mentioned the successful performances by Jamaican Olympic swimmer, Alia Atkinson.

“Alia certainly provided for us a great indication where we can go with swimming and there are many other athletes waiting in the background for the opportunity,” the Minister said.