

Minister with responsibility for Sports, Hon. Natalie Neita-Headley, says the Jamaica Athletics Administrative Association, with the full support of the Government, has begun to explore with the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) the possibility of Jamaica hosting a Diamond League meet.

The Minister was speaking at the eighth regional Investment and Capital Markets Conference, held on January 24 at the Pegasus Hotel, in New Kingston.

“It is clear from these discussions that by hosting a meeting in Jamaica, the Diamond League will be able to build the worldwide appeal of athletics. It is also clear that a Jamaica meeting will be able to provide world class entertainment by providing outstanding television images,” Mrs. Neita-Headley said.

Mrs. Neita-Headley argued that having the Diamond League in Jamaica would give a fair chance to top athletes of all disciplines to gain international media exposure, earn their living and have their success in major championships honoured.

She noted that internationally, most track and field athletes want to compete in Jamaica.

“They see this nation as the Mecca of track and field, where their efforts will be fully understood and appreciated. They want to experience firsthand, the adulation of the same fans that have cheered on the Jamaican champions and applauded our regional friends when they compete at the national stadium,” she added.

The Sports Minister outlined how the government would be involved in facilitating the hosting of a Diamond League Meet in the country, citing the availability of hotels and a stadium facility.

She also pointed out that promotion of the event would have to be done through the Jamaica Tourist Board, the Caribbean Tourism Organization, the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, SportsMax and other regional and international media.

“The Government of Jamaica would be responsible for leading the discussion with our regional brothers and sisters to secure buy-in to the event; not as a Jamaica’s Diamond League meet, but as the Regional Diamond League meet, with the outcome being measurable regionally,” Mrs. Neita Headley said.

The Minister added that to host a successful Diamond League would require that bureaucratic obstacles are kept to the absolute minimum in making the participation of athletes from all global destinations as pain-free as possible.

She said this would include arrangements at immigration and customs to expedite arrivals and departures at the airports as well as ground travel arrangements for the duration of the meet.

Discussions will also be held with the security forces so as to assist with the security arrangements for the visiting athletes, and the Ministry of Tourism and the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association would be involved to ensure that proper housing is available for all visiting athletes and their teams, as well as the media and persons who travel to Jamaica to watch the meet.

“We have before us a real opportunity to leverage our success as a track and field super power. How we seek to capitalize on the dominance we currently enjoy will eventually reflect in our country’s balance sheet,” the Minister said.

The Samsung Diamond League is an annual series of track and field meetings held from 2010 onwards. It was designed to replace the IAAF Golden League, which was held annually since 1998.