MEDIA STATEMENT

NO MORE SAFARI ATTIRE AT INTERNATIONAL EVENTS, COMMITTEE PLEADS WITH SASCOC

The Portfolio Committee on Sport, Arts and Culture urged the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC) to ensure that Team South Africa is equipped with good-quality clothing at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham later in the year.

SASCOC and the department briefed the committee on preparations for the Commonwealth Games and heard that preparatory work has started, including how the athletes will be incentivised.

The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Beauty Dlulane, said that Team South Africa’s appearance at the Tokyo Olympics is still a matter of concern and should not be repeated. “We cannot allow a sponsor to just decide clothing of our athletes. There is no way that South African athletes can attend international events without reflecting South Africa in their attire,” she said.

The committee was uncomfortable with the sub-quality attire won in Tokyo and wants to avoid a repeat of this situation by ensuring that the specifications for any tenders are drafted through SASCOC.

The committee was told that the design for clothing will be managed collectively with designers from the Commonwealth Games’ clothing sponsor, Mr Price. President of SASCOC, Mr Barry Hendricks, said athletes’ clothing will be managed differently this year. “SASCOC and Mr Price entered into an agreement that they will be sponsors for SASCOC until 2024. There is no procurement for sponsors. SASCOC wants to bring as many sponsors on board as possible. SASCOC needs the sponsors.”

The conditions of the sponsorship state that SASCOC will report on the financials and stays off negative reporting. “We will act in the best interests of our athletes and, based on the Tokyo experience, we are working with Mr Price’s professional designers. The clothing to be designed will be in the colours of the South African flags.”

The design is influenced by a number of factors and SASCOC could not ask anyone to comment on the design and the colours of the clothing. “But we will ensure that athletes will be recognisable as from South Africa.”

Committee Members asked whether athletes had been given space to express what contributes to their poor performances at international competitions. They also wanted to know about the working relationship with the South African Institute for a Drug Free Sports (SAIDS) and funding from the National Lottery.

SASCOC said it has a good working relationship with SAIDS, but there are confidentiality issues when it comes to managing individual athletes. SASCOC received about R5 million from the National Lottery, but that will change as talks are ongoing. Mr Hendricks mentioned the athletes’ commission was formed so that athletes’ voices could be heard, and it often reports back to SASCOC. SASCOC also collaborates with experts to assist with performance assessment and planning. “We need a longer-term vision if are to turn the organisation around,” Mr Hendricks said.

The committee will receive the review report that will include what the athletes have said.

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