

# SA hosting its first 2015 World Championships for people with Down syndrome

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By Bridgette Macheke

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**[Johannesburg, 25 November 2015]** South Africa is hosting the 2015 World Championships for people with Down syndrome. The event incorporates the 3rd IAADS (International Athletic Association for persons with Down syndrome) World Athletics Championships and the 1<sup>st</sup> ITTADS (International Table Tennis Association for people with Down syndrome) World Table Tennis Championships.

Taking pace in Bloemfontein at the Dr. Petrus Molemela Stadium from 21 to 27 November, the event sets the stage for athletics and table tennis competitors from 17 countries across the world to meet and compete for international recognition in their respective categories. The 2015 World Championships for people with Down syndrome are being hosted under the auspices of the South African Sports Association for the Intellectually Impaired (SASA-II) in partnership with Lulamisa, a community development organisation, and funded by the National Lottery.

According to Lizzie Vogel, SASA-II President, the event will host athletes from all over the world, including Austria, Costa Rica, Egypt, Finland, France, Great Britain, Italy, Macau, Mexico, Portugal, Turkey and Venezuela. “Along with many other partners that have made this event a reality, SASA-II is proud, not only to host the event, but to create a platform from which to raise awareness and educate people about Down syndrome,” says Vogel.



Oftentimes, sports events dedicated to intellectually impaired or differently-abled people are not afforded the exposure they need, nor are the athletes given the recognition they deserve for excellence in their respective fields. “The World Championships for people with Down syndrome, incorporating the 3rd IAADS World Athletics Championships and 1st ITTADS World Table Tennis Championships, represent an opportunity for SASA-II and partners to have the event acknowledged as an important entry on the local and international sporting calendar. More so, we hope that the event will provide the impetus for greater recognition and support for athletes with Down Syndrome,” remarks Vogel, adding, “It’s very important to acknowledge and support events such as this, because they provide an ideal opportunity to show South Africa and the world how our athletes prepare and train for events, how they compete and of course their many sterling achievements.”





2015 marks the first year the World Championships will be hosted not only in South Africa, but on the African continent. “South Africa is the only African country competing in the World Championships for people with Down syndrome and while we are proud to represent the continent, we’d be delighted to see our neighbours and fellow Africans partake in future,” remarks Vogel, concluding, “It’s a great privilege for all involved to have had a hand in making this event a reality. With only a few days to go before our athletes take centre stage and compete for world titles, we share in their excitement and anticipation for what promises to be not only a world-class sporting event, but a chance for sheer hard work and dedication to enjoy the recognition it deserves.”

***The 2015 World Championships for people with Down syndrome, incorporating the 3rd IAADS World Athletics Championships & 1st ITTADS World Table Tennis Championships, have been made possible through the hard work and commitment of the Local Organising Committee (LOC), South African Sports Association for the Intellectually Impaired (SASA-II), International Athletic Association for Persons with Down Syndrome (IAADS) and the International Table Tennis Association for people with Down Syndrome (ITTADS).***

**About the South African Sports Association for the Intellectually Impaired (SASA-II):**

The South African Sports Association for the Intellectually Impaired (SASA-II) serves as the governing body in matters pertaining to the amateur sporting activities for all persons with an Intellectual Impairment. This referenced group of athletes compete in regional, provincial, national and international events.

SASA-II is a member of SASCOC (South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee) and Inas (International Sports Federation for people with Intellectual Disability). SASA-II adheres to an international definition of intellectual disability that is recognised by the United Nation World Health Organisation.

SU-DS (The Sports Union for athletes with Down syndrome) states: “SU-DS will promote sport worldwide for athletes with Down syndrome to the highest levels of sporting excellence.”

Down syndrome is a chromosomal disorder which causes delay in physical, intellectual and language development. Down syndrome is one of the leading clinical causes of intellectual disability in the world; however, it is not an illness but rather a genetic disorder.

