

# SA ready to host 2013 Afcon - Mbalula

By [Nthambeleni Gabara](#)

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JOHANNESBURG: Sports Minister Fikile Mbalula says government is ready to host the 2013 Africa Cup of Nations (Afcon). Mbalula briefed reporters about government's stance relating to the hosting of the 2013 Afcon as well about the signing of guarantees by the bidding host cities in Johannesburg on Friday, 13 April 2012.



"The issue of whether South Africa still wishes to host the tournament or not is a non-starter; South Africa has made a commitment to host the Afcon in 2013 and that's how it will be.

"By committing to host, government has shown that is prepared to sign the guarantees relating to the hosting of the tournament and will eventually do so," he said.

However, Mbalula said the reality presented by the time available to the country between now and the hosting of the tournament dictated that certain things needed to be done differently to achieve the same anticipated success.

He said all spheres of government and stakeholders, including the prospective host cities, MECs for Sports and the Confederation of African Football (CAF) should be engaged urgently to discuss issues such as the financial implications of hosting matches.

The 2013 Afcon will begin on 19 January and end on 10 February, with 16 teams set to participate.

The minister said the matter was now going through the processes of Cabinet approval and that a detailed statement will be made once Cabinet considerations were complete.

"For now, I will appeal to all spheres of government, the South African Football Association (Safa), CAF 2013, the LOC and all concerned to desist from discussing events processes and implications of this event - financial, political or otherwise -

until Cabinet has considered our submission and pronounced on the outcomes," he said.

When asked about how government, working with CAF, was going to ensure that people watch the games at the stadiums, Mbalula said: "South Africa is a sport loving country and soccer comes top. Football is in the blood of this nation ... people should come to our country in numbers next year so that they can enjoy football with us."

According to the 2013 Afcon LOC CEO, Muzo Mbebe, the host cities that have already signed the necessary guarantees are Rustenburg Municipality, Mbombela Municipality and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality.

Polokwane pulled out of the tournament, saying that the more than R20 million required of the hosts would be better used for service delivery projects.

South Africa will host the 2013 Championship of African Nations (CHAN) tournament that was initially scheduled to be played in Libya, but is currently ravaged by civil war.

This follows the South African Football Association (Safa) and the Football Federation of Libya signing an agreement regarding the hosting of the 2013 and the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations (Afcon) tournaments.

In terms of the agreement, Libya will host the 2017 Afcon, which had been awarded to South Africa, while Safa will take over the hosting of the 2013 CHAN as well as the 2014 Afcon, which was supposed to be played in Libya.

The Official Draw for the AFCON 2013 finals will take place on 26 of October.

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