

Mutko Tells Athletes to Relax About Anti-Gay Law

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko on Thursday told world athletics championship contenders to "relax" about Russia's law banning "gay propaganda" and said their private lives were safe during the Aug. 10 to 18 event in Moscow.

The legislation outlawing the promotion of homosexual relations has led to worldwide protests, with even U.S. President Obama weighing in on the debate. (See related story, Page 4.)

When asked how it would affect athletes competing in the championships beginning Saturday and next year's winter Olympics in Sochi, Mutko was dismissive of any concerns.

"I want to ask you to calm down, as in addition to this law we have a constitution that guarantees all citizens a private life," he told a packed news conference at a Moscow hotel.

"It is not intended to deprive people of any religion, race or sexual orientation but to ban the promotion of non-traditional relations among the young generation.

"All the athletes and organizations should be relaxed — their rights will be protected ... but of course you have to respect the laws of the country you are in."

IAAF president Lamine Diack was similarly unconcerned about a law that led British writer Stephen Fry to compare the Sochi Games to the Nazi-controlled Berlin summer Olympics of 1936.

"I don't feel there is a problem whatsoever," he said.

"There is a law that exists, it has to be respected. We are here for the world championships and have no problem whatsoever and I'm not worried at all."

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