



3 May 2019

SUNDAY WORLD

Attention:

Ms Mapula Nkosi, Editor Sunday World

Mr Bongani Siqoko, Editor Sunday Times

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: CONTINUED HARASSMENT OF THE SABC BY SUNDAY WORLD AND ITS REPORTER

We wish to draw your attention to the *Sunday World's* continued unfair, factually incorrect and biased reporting on the affairs of the SABC, its Board, Executives and staff. It is the SABC's opinion that the *Sunday World's* reporting is not only misleading and malicious but borders on harassment.

The SABC is aware of, and is committed to the constitutional imperatives of freedom of expression and free speech. However, as you are aware the above comes with the necessary responsibility and accountability. The continued attack on the SABC is without merit and potentially constitutes a breach of key aspects of the Press Code of Conduct and your Group's pursuance of journalistic ethics and excellence.

The *Sunday World's* media story of 28 April 2019 entitled "*SABC BOARD "SPLIT" OVER AXING OF COO MAROLENG*" was a clear attempt to discredit the newly-elected SABC Board, ensure disunity and division as well as mislead the public. In fact, the response provided by the SABC's spokesperson, Ms Vuyo Mthembu was factual to the point that such a narrative of a so called "SPLIT" was non-existent, nor factual. It is unfortunate that your reporter, Mr Aubrey Mothombeni, chooses to ignore the facts in his determination to fly a flag for individuals that include, amongst others,

dismissed SABC management, former employees and those that are currently subject to consequence management across the Corporation.

Notwithstanding the aforesaid, the SABC was again threatened this week with similar stories and allegations to that of the previous week's relating to confidential disciplinary processes which tarnish the reputation of our employees. It was again based on a set of peculiar and inaccurate questions designed to confuse and/or mislead the public. We are left with the notion that the *Sunday World* and its reporter Mothombeni are both intent on furthering an embedded news agenda to humiliate and to bring the public broadcaster, its executive leadership and its newly-appointed Board into disrepute.

Furthermore, the SABC believes that the recent stories published by the *Sunday World* were not in the public interest but rather a ploy to sow discord within the organisation. The consistent singling out of the SABC among all other SOEs and media organisations is indicative of an agenda that is aimed at damaging the public broadcaster in the eyes of the public. In addition, the SABC is particularly concerned about the persistent focus on human resources and disciplinary-related matters, which in many cases, have not even been finalised, are still under investigation or *sub-judice*. Surely, the *Sunday World* must realise that it compromises the SABC to divulge confidential details which it cannot. The reporting on human resources related matters about ordinary employees who are not public figures has the potential to destroy careers and reputations.

While we respect media freedom and fully appreciate the journalist's right to freedom of expression, we will not accede to pressure to consistently answer questions that are without merit, fact and contrary to the precepts of credible journalism. It is clear that the journalist in question's intent is to cause harm to the SABC, its executives and its Board and is in breach of ethical and acceptable journalistic practices. The SABC believes that the reporting of the *Sunday World* on the SABC, in the last few weeks, is part of a continued trend and is potentially in direct contravention of the Press Code of Conduct that Tiso Blackstar and all its publications subscribe to. The Code instructs all publications not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information.

To further illustrate the reporter in question's blatant bias and embedded journalistic history, we point you to the fact that he portrayed Mr Hlaudi Motsoeneng as a COO of exemplary record to give advice on how the current executive and Board should conduct its business. This is not the first time that *Sunday World* has sought to portray Mr Motsoeneng as a paragon of virtue and business acumen.

As a matter of public record, under Mr. Motsoeneng's leadership the SABC was thrown into a gauntlet of reckless spending, mass scale corruption and breaches in governance and the legislation that governs the public broadcaster. This was decisively confirmed by the Public Protector in 2014 and Parliament's Ad-Hoc Committee in 2017. It is public knowledge that the SIU and the SABC have commenced court action to recover millions of Rands from Mr Motsoeneng. The SIU is also close to finalising investigations into more large scale fraud and maladministration that took place under Mr. Motsoeneng and his former Executives.

In our efforts to engage with the paper, the SABC reached out to the Editor, Ms Mapule Nkosi, on 2 May 2019 to discuss the *Sunday World* being in possession of confidential SABC documents and continuous negative reporting by the newspaper on SABC matters. Our request for a meeting was rebuffed.

While we note that the *Sunday World* is described as a publication of "racy infotainment, celebrities, sport and gossip and specialist pages on fashion, beauty, health, motoring and money", we draw your urgent attention to the fact that Tiso Blackstar and all its editorial titles subscribe to the Press Code of Conduct.

Key elements of the code compel your journalist to among other aspects:

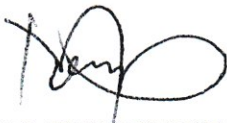
1. take care to report news truthfully, accurately and fairly:
 - 1.2 present news in context and in a balanced manner, without any intentional or negligent departure from the facts whether by distortion, exaggeration or misrepresentation, material omissions, or summarization;
 - 1.3 present only what may reasonably be true as fact; opinions, allegations, rumours or suppositions shall be presented clearly as such;

- 1.4 obtain news legally, honestly and fairly, unless public interest dictates otherwise.

Given the current perceived low levels of public trust in the media in South Africa, we believe that further poor and inaccurate reporting will have a serious impact on the credibility of journalism and the good work being done by the current SABC leadership and its new Board which are committed to turn the SABC around and restore it to a credible national public broadcaster. The SABC continues to pursue consequence management at all levels and will not be intimidated or distracted from its duty in this regard.

We reserve our rights to pursue all and any legal options available to us to protect the reputation of the SABC, its staff, Executives and Board which include submitting a complaint to the Press Ombudsman. The SABC will be publishing this letter in the interests of the public.

Yours sincerely



MR PHILLY MOILWA

ACTING GROUP EXECUTIVE CORPORATE AFFAIRS AND MARKETING