



MEDIA STATEMENT

SABC BOARD RESPONSE TO BEMAWU LETTER

Johannesburg-Sunday, 29 March 2020 The Board of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) has noted with deep concern allegations on crucial issues raised by the union, BEMAWU, in a letter addressed to the SABC Group Executive, Madoda Mxakwe, but shared widely in the public space today before there was an opportunity to respond.

Given the severity of matters, the SABC Board has decided to speak out against this continued irresponsible peddling of alarmist and false information about coronavirus-related matters inside and outside the organisation, particularly at a time when accurate information is so important to every single employee of the Corporation.

The SABC had, well ahead of the disaster and lock-down period, instituted crucial measures for the safety of our staff. We also decided that most employees should work remotely with only critical and essential staff working from our offices. The SABC Board can assure all employees and the public that whenever there has been a suspicion of external exposure to the coronavirus affecting a staff member, the necessary precautionary measures were immediately taken by management, with employees being asked to self-isolate and work from home while tests were being conducted.

In one case where a test result was negative and the staff resumed their duties, no one was forced to come back to work. For BEMAWU to continue to use selective information to spread fake news, despite indicating having seen factual communication in relation to this particular incident, is extremely regrettable. The damaging allegations made against executives, managers and the institution by BEMAWU, as well as the panic and anxiety these have caused SABC employees cannot be left unchallenged.

With respect to the employee who tested positive, management had no reason to even suspect this until test results became available, as the employee was on sick leave for an unrelated condition. It is quite sad that instead of showing compassion, solidarity and support for our colleagues and their families at this very difficult time of national crisis, BEMAWU has decided to use this as an opportunistic, point-scoring exercise. The Board has been assured by our executives that SABC

News management and the Wellness Unit have been in communication with our staff and they are being given the necessary support and monitoring.

We urge BEMAWU and others who share similar views to stop being reckless by spreading unverified information and causing unnecessary trauma and panic. BEMAWU should rather provide constructive solutions as a labour organisation at the SABC, in the spirit of patriotic unity and working together, to assist the public broadcaster to deal with this unprecedented challenge. Should BEMAWU persist with these false and damaging allegations, the SABC reserves its right to take further action at the appropriate time.

The SABC emphatically denies that staff will ever be compelled to return to work if the environment is not deemed safe.

The SABC Board fully acknowledges the fear and anxiety this has triggered within the SABC and appeals all to employees to continue supporting precautionary efforts to curb the spread of the coronavirus and reduce infections. The Board is fully confident in SABC's management's efforts to mitigate risks to employees as they continue to implement the contingency plans prepared by public broadcaster's respective operational divisions.

This unprecedented and uncertain time for all organisations, locally and globally, calls for mature leadership aimed at prioritising the health and safety of all. We must work together. The SABC as the public broadcaster will continue to play its vital national role in the fight against the pandemic, using all our broadcasting and digital platforms to disseminate factual and potentially life-saving information.

END

Issued By: SABC Board chairperson Bongumusa Makhathini on behalf of SABC Board

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