

WELCOME SPEECH MR. MXAKWE

SABC EDITORIAL POLICIES VIRTUAL LAUNCH



DATE: Friday, 03 July 2020

TIME: 10h00

SUBJECT: The SABC Present the Final Draft of the Editorial Policies



SABC Board of Directors

Group Executives

Members of the Public and Civil Society

Distinguished Guests

Members of the Media

Fellow Colleagues

Good morning

It is very rare that institutions get a perfectly-timed opportunity to reinvent themselves and reset their direction. It is often shocks, turbulence and crisis situations that trigger organizations to reexamine and reposition themselves for different circumstances, and better performance. The review and launch of the editorial policies of the SABC is no different. The conditions that prevailed when they were effected 16 years ago have changed drastically. It is important to note that this year, the SABC marks 70 years since the launch of its first news service in 1950.

The significance of the policies being launched today lies in building trust with audiences and in ensuring that our content, in all its formats, continues to resonate with the prescripts of our public mandate, and more so in providing universal access to credible content. Recent experiences within the SABC have shown that ethical drifts in editorial decision-making and journalistic practice, as well as the abandonment of the purpose existence of the public broadcaster, can be catastrophic for the organization, erode public trust and diminish its relevance. We cannot afford another experience of such.

The task of dealing with such devastation requires a lot of work and resources, and restoring institutional integrity is a mammoth task. We have put in place systems to strengthen the editorial accountability of our public news service, and place editorial authority where it belongs, in the SABC newsroom. We are grateful to the public, civil society and SABC employees for showing concern and their care to raise this aspect of editorial governance during the public consultation process.

For our public news service, this requires absolute level-headedness and a real commitment to the public mandate. Any act that compromises this editorial governance framework will diminish the public support and goodwill that the SABC now enjoys, as a result of the excellent work of

our newsroom. The collective conscience and commitment to ethical journalistic practice is what will lead to the fulfilment of the vision of our News Division, to become a premium source for credible and incisive journalism in South Africa and the continent.

The recognition that our news service continues to receive for its work is testimony that when we commit to doing the right things, nothing is impossible. As Alan Rusbridger writes in his book *Breaking News: The Remaking of Journalism and Why It Matters*, he says, “Great reporters are highly celebrated. But they are - generally – only as good as the institution that supports them. If their reporting genuinely challenges power, they will need organizational courage behind them”. This is what the Corporation is doing. These Editorial Policies seek to protect and support our colleagues in the newsroom, and require strict observance to strengthen the boundaries that nurture and preserve public trust.

The need for independent credible public service journalism is significantly heightened now, as citizens are trying to make sense of daily challenges and complexities in their lives and different environments. It is this imperative that requires the integrity of the newsroom to be safeguarded from any individual pursuits and group interests. SABC News exists to serve the public and it must do so with unquestionable independence and impartiality.

Thank you.