

NEWS & EDITORIAL BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR:

MS. MARY PAPAYA

THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF ROLE



Friday, 03 July 2020

10h00

THE SABC LAUNCHES ITS EDITORIAL POLICIES



SABC Board of Directors

Group Executives

Staff Members

Members of the Public and Civil Organisations

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning,

It delights me to have the honour of your presence today, as the SABC launches its Editorial Policies. The public broadcaster is a crucial pillar in the life of this country, and its contribution to the national discourse can never be underestimated. If the citizens were to have no dedicated source for news and information, education and entertainment, it would be catastrophic for the social life and democracy of this country.

This is the reason we find ourselves here today, launching the reviewed editorial policies aimed at enabling the public service broadcaster to provide unrestrained coverage and reflect all issues affecting the country's populace. It is primarily this public interest obligation which has necessitated the review of the editorial accountability and upward referral functions, as they are critical to our content services and are linked to the Editor-in-Chief role.

Ladies and Gentlemen! You would remember that in the previous iteration of the Editorial Policies, the Editor-in-Chief role was a function assigned to and carried out by the Group Chief Executive Officer. Under this arrangement, in instances where there were decisions requiring complex consideration during programming or content production, editorial staff were expected to consult their supervisors for guidance. This process of voluntary upward referral would go right up to the Group CEO, in his/ her capacity as Editor-in-Chief.

In the Editorial Policies being launched today, the Editor-in-Chief responsibility changes from the Group CEO and is now assigned to the News and Current Affairs Group Executive. This is consistent with inputs received as part of the submissions made during

the process of formulating the policies. In essence, this new arrangement is part of well-considered efforts to strengthen editorial controls in the newsroom and ensuring that journalists take full accountability for all editorial and programming decisions, and do so without any hindrance or interference.

According to the new arrangement, the Group CEO designates full responsibility, and holds the News & Current Affairs Group Executive accountable for the following;

- The credibility of all news-related content and programming in all news services;
- The protection of the editorial independence and impartiality of the newsroom;
- The preservation of the editorial integrity of the public news service;
- Strict observance of the editorial policies of the SABC; and
- Exceptional delivery on the public mandate.

While the Editor-in-Chief will be accountable to the Group CEO for the overall performance of SABC News, the ultimate editorial responsibility rests with him or her. There will be no upward referral of editorial decisions handled by the Group CEO. The new policies also provide for the News & Editorial Sub-Committee of the SABC Board to exercise oversight and continued protection of the SABC News' editorial independence.

I have confidence that the 2020 Editorial Policies will provide the best possible guidance to our editorial and production staff, in delivering inclusive compelling content with absolute impartiality and without fear or favour.

Thank you.