

THE SABC CHAIRPERSON – DR B S NGUBANE INPUTE TO THE CBA CONFERENCE IN JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

19 APRIL 2010

BROADCASTING FOR TOTAL CITIZEN EMPOWERMENT

Hon Minister for Communications, General (Retired) Sipiwe Nyanda

President of the CBA, and DG Voice of Nigeria, Mr Abubakar Jijwa

Hon Mr Vadi, Chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee for Communications

Hon Chairperson of the Select Committee of the National Council of Provinces for Communications and Labour –MS

Leaders of Delegations to the 28th General Conference of the CBA

Chairperson of the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa

Ladies and Gentlemen

Broadcasting for total citizen empowerment is the powerful vision of the SABC and embedded in it are:

The role of the public service broadcaster, as stated in the SABC Broadcasting Charter. The charter obliges the corporation to provide programming that:

- Reflects South African attitudes, opinions, ideas, values and artistic creativity
- Makes accessible programmes of information, education and entertainment
- Offers a plurality of views and a variety of news and analyses

The importance of partnerships and conversations with stakeholders in society as well as other broadcasters. This is important internationally as well as nationally because we have to continually learn from one another what is best practice in:

- Providing training for our citizen in media and information literacy
- Management and financial control in broadcasting organisations
- The role of media in promoting democracy and social justice
- Good practice in the regulation of broadcasting, especially in areas of quality content, preparing for the transition from analogue to digital terrestrial radio and television.

Providing opportunities for participation of audiences in the creation of content/news:

- This enables our broadcasters to adjust as society gets more complex and the multiplicity of news sources grow exponentially through the internet

And new media: by harnessing the capacity of audiences we shall be enhancing broadcasting programming in some of these ways:

- To provide the news that helps us understand what is going on around us
- To provide analysis to help us understand the underlying trends and movements
- To supplement and extend our education so that we enjoy lifelong learning
- To move our hearts through the arts
- To lift our spirits through sports
- To amuse and entertain us through comedy and popular programming

Because through new technology, broadcasting is also offering the chance for us to talk to each other, share our experiences and interact in new and amazing ways. Twitter, for example, has played an unexpected part in certain social upheavals in coordinating overseas – but it is also proving a hazard through the exploitation of innocent youngsters in very undesirable ways. And the phone-in, which has been with us for many years, is now used during elections for people to talk directly to their politicians and to question them about their policies.

Broadcasters have to make sure that they are using appropriate checks before transmitting material through some of the innovative routes. Used properly, they can enhance broadcasting. But unwisely they can be a menace.

This is why I am glad that the CBA are using this conference to launch the 4th edition of their Editorial Guidelines, which covers all these areas, and are also launching a new publication, in cooperation with UNESCO, on how best to handle user generated content. The Editorial Guidelines have been translated into many languages and have been widely adopted, so we will be looking at the updated 4th edition with interest.

I am glad that the conference has also run a workshop for broadcasting regulators. Without a good framework for broadcasting – and many countries in the world do not have this – the broadcasters struggle, and the public suffers.

Broadcasting is no longer a one way process of sending information to the public: it can now empower the public to make their voices heard and change policies. This will lead to major developments in how politicians respond to the public, and how political decisions are made.

As broadcasters we have to lead these changes, and ensure that the decisions are taken to ensure that the changes are introduced in responsible ways.

We also have to think ahead about how we, as broadcasters, react to the public in terms of our governance. Are the mechanisms in place to make us responsive to public opinion, or are we still using a constitution for the pre-new media age?

We want not only an informed citizenry but an empowered one. Broadcasting is essential for both. Citizens are already sending broadcasters footage, shot on mobiles, of anti-social acts. Politicians, in several countries, have to face investigative programming which show them in undesirable activities. These are all part of empowering the citizen, so that she is not only on the receiving end of government but helps ensure officialdom is operating in her best interest.

Let me close by re-affirming that at SABC we are committed to broadcasting for total citizen empowerment.

Thank you.