

WELCOME ADDRESS FOR THE 3<sup>RD</sup> MEDIA & SOCIETY CONFERENCE BY  
THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE SABC BOARD: MR EDDIE FUNDE

SABC Board members

SABC Management

SANEF Members

Messer Cheriff SY from Burkina Faso

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of SABC Board and Management, It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the Media & Society Conference. This Conference is our 3rd event which is jointly hosted by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and South African National Editor's Forum (SANEF).

I would like to acknowledge stakeholders in the Media industry who ensure that South African Media is exciting and outstanding.

The SABC and SANEF identified and agreed on the theme for this year to be "Black Wednesday 19 October 1977 – 30 years later". This the year, exactly 30 years ago, the racist colonial regime of Apartheid, in a desperate attempt to silence the progressive media and to stem the groundswell in the struggle and resistance against the criminal system of Apartheid, which espoused white supremacy at the expense of the disempowerment and lives of the black majority 17 black organization, and two newspapers, the World and the Weekend world were silence through a banning order. Numerous events have taken place in the last few days commemorate this occasion and to pay a fitting tribute to those who, at the risk of being jailed and tortured or even killed, continued to raised the flag of press freedom.

Last week Friday, at a dinner hosted by The Department of Arts and Culture and SANEF, Minister Palo Jordan gave a scholarly expose of the development of the Media of resistance going back as far as the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, in response to colonial domination of the means of communication, and reminded us that the fight for press freedom was

initiated by black intellectuals such as Walter Rubusana and Sol Plaatjie. Both of whom played no mean role in the struggle against racial domination and for the freedoms that we enjoy today.

Last night Charles Nqakula, who in his capacity as the last Vice President of the Union of Black Journalists, one of the organizations banned on the Black Wednesday, gave us an account of the valiant efforts of those latter pioneers of press freedom in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, when the fight for human dignity had taken an even more militant turn. Today, the SABC and SANEF, honour those heroes and pioneers, by holding this conference, pregnant with historical meaning, at a time when our democracy is beginning to take root. When those who made enormous sacrifices are grappling with the practicalities of imposing a meaningful democracy on the masses of society, privileged but largely underprivileged.

The media is tackling the task of how to translate this task into a meaningful exercise that is representative of those masses of our society, assisting them to clearly articulate their dreams and aspirations. Pointing the direction to how the challenges of society such as poverty in the midst of plenty, unemployment in a growing economy, the management of state affairs in a manner that is effective and free of corruption, human dignity and public service. Like our predecessors, we are and should play a meaningful role in addressing the most challenging issues of our time as outlined above. In that way we shall be following in the footsteps of those heroes of the past.

Therefore, we believe that your presence and sharing your views around the role of the media within our society will be a major contribution to that historical legacy. We will be able to have a robust debate which will encourage a vital exchange of ideas about media and society issues.

Let me congratulate the team for coming up with a very challenging theme for this year's conference, which focuses on the new challenges to press freedom, the underlying societal ethics; and public confidence in the media including what the parameters of public interest are and where we can draw the line into intrusion into private lives. It is imperative for the country and the continent as a whole to debate these issues, where at the end; our aim will be to monitor the media in order to promote the development of a

free, fair, ethical and critical media culture in South Africa and the rest of the continent. This will also help us to exercise our media freedom constructively, and aspire to be the leading provider of a reliable African voice to the people of the continent and beyond.

You'll remember from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) inquiry, the role of media during the apartheid era is another example of open dialogue which was intended to support the country's reconstructive effort. The TRC examination of how media suppressed information about human rights, abuses and the treatment of staff by media organizations and the state, prompted public discussion of, as well as debate within media about, those issues. At the same time, it revived the philosophical debate about press ethics and editorial freedom.

We also need, therefore to continue debating about the current threats and challenges to press freedom and its role in building a better society.

Let me use this occasion to thank the SABC and SANEF Boards for initiating this event, three years ago, from the SABC side in particular, Thami Mazwai, who as I recall was a persistent advocate in my Board for the need of a media forum such a this for media to engage amongst themselves on matters affecting society, our public affairs division and all those who continue to make this event a tremendous event.

ONCE AGAIN WELCOME AND I THANK YOU...