

President Jacob Zuma calls on INMSA to support MDDA

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Address by His Excellency, President Jacob Zuma at the launch of Independent Newspapers and Media SA under new ownership, Cape Town.

Programme Director,
Minister Yunus Carrim and all Ministers and Deputy Ministers,
Dr Iqbal Surve, Chairman of the Independent Newspapers and Media SA,
The Chairperson of Print and Digital Media South Africa (PDMSA),
Mr Lumko Mtimde, the CEO of the Media Development and Diversity Agency,
Media owners, editors and journalists,
Members of the diplomatic corps,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Fellow South Africans,

Good evening to you all.

It is always a wonderful occasion when we meet to celebrate progress in our country! Tonight we have gathered to mark officially, the return of the largest media group to South African ownership. We are marking this milestone during an important year, the celebration of 20 years of freedom and democracy.

We thank Independent News and Media South Africa for bringing us together tonight, so that we can reflect on this important sector that is supposed to be the mirror of society. We extend our hearty congratulations to Dr Iqbal Surve and his partners for the successful acquisition of the company.

In its approval of the acquisition of the group by Sekunjalo, the Competition Commission said this merger may "result in the transformation of the print media industry".

Critically, the Competition Commission proceeded to remind us that before the merger, historically disadvantaged persons did not have any shareholding in Independent News and Media South Africa, which was 100 percent foreign-owned.

The Sekunjalo consortium that acquired Independent News and Media South Africa combines the interests and investments of private sector players, the labour movement, government as represented by the Public Investment Corporation and the Government Employees Pension Fund, as well as investors from our BRICS partner state, the People's Republic of China.

We are confident that the change in ownership will result in a more indigenous look and perspective in the content of the Independent media products nationwide.

Compatriots and friends,

The February 2014 State of the Nation Address dealt in great detail with the progress we have made - not just as government but also as a country - in addressing the five key priorities we adopted in 2009.

The focus areas are growing the economy and creating decent work, improving health care and education, the fight against crime and corruption as well as accelerating rural development and land reform.

Our assessment of change since 1994 - or at very least since 2009 - shows very clearly that South Africa is a much better place than it was in 1994. Working together, we have indeed done more. Any casual tour around our beautiful country will show any observer that positive change has reached many parts of our country which had been neglected for decades.

The wave of change and progress has been unstoppable. We are the first to acknowledge the challenges that continue to face us. We still have a lot of work to do to further improve the lives of our people. The success we have scored thus far gives us the resolve to press ahead and continue working harder, for a better life for all.

As we tell the inspiring good South African story, the media sector is not just a witness to it, but an actor in it as well. The media industry itself is an economic actor and critical contributor to job creation and the national wealth which now stands at a total of more than R3,5 trillion.

Tonight we reflect on the good story of this country that enshrines freedom of expression so vigorously, and the story of our media industry and its development. Clause 16 of our progressive Constitution enshrines freedom of expression, which includes media freedom. Clause 17 guarantees freedom of association, and enshrines the right of assembly, pickets and demonstrations.

People used to go to jail in this country for merely expressing their views, particularly if those were considered to be against the apartheid establishment. We are therefore truly proud to live in a society where everyone is free to say what they think. We enjoy these freedoms thanks to the foundation laid by fearless freedom fighters, led by the African National Congress (ANC).

Many journalists also suffered immensely fighting for the right to tell the story of apartheid colonialism, the story of the suffering of our people. We remember Zwelakhe Sisulu, Joe Thloloe, Percy Qoboza, Thami Mazwai with whom I once shared a prison cell, and many other journalists who refused to be silenced by the apartheid regime.

Compatriots and friends,

The second good story, is the remarkable expansion of the media industry, especially the broadcasting and community media sectors in the past 20 years of freedom. The South African media and broadcasting industry of 2014 is certainly larger and more diverse than that of 1994.

We have the SABC with 18 radio stations, four TV channels, one of which is a 24 hour news channel. There is ETV/ENCA which now has a good footprint beyond our borders and ANN7 which is also making its mark in the country. We also celebrate the growth of community television stations, now standing at about seven.

There are more than 18 commercial radio stations and more than 150 community radio stations. Radio listenership for community radio has increased to more than 25 percent of the total radio listenership. Community radio stations reach out to our communities in their own indigenous languages, including the Khoi and San language which is now broadcast on the public radio.

I had the pleasure of speaking to listeners of more than sixty community radio stations from around the country on the 18th of February. The state legislative and regulatory environment has contributed to this phenomenal growth of radio and community media.

The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa, Sentech and the Media Development and Diversity Agency, (MDDA), have been working hard to promote diversity and open up the media space to other players.

Government, through the MDDA, has supported more than 560 projects with R272 million in grant funding since the inception of the MDDA just over 10 years ago. Signal distribution fees and other costs for community radio are discounted and subsidised by both the MDDA and the Department of Communications.

The frequency spectrum plan which accommodates all three tiers and grant funding is also provided for community radio stations through the MDDA.

I hope that a newly invigorated Independent News and Media South Africa will find the resources to match its resolve to promote a more diverse media sector in the country, and that it will partner closely with the MDDA on projects with promise.

The MDDA supports projects in all nine provinces, focusing mainly on historically disadvantaged communities and the use of indigenous languages.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We also marvel at the good story of the phenomenal growth of the country's telecommunications sector, which has grown from 8.2 billion rand to about 180 billion rand between 1993 and 2012.

We have moved from zero to more than 67 million sim cards in 20 years, in some cases with one person owning more than one sim card. That is the story of South Africa, a country that is full of surprises, possibilities, opportunities and success.

The growth of cellular telephony has had an important link with the growth of social media and citizen journalism. Some serious crimes in the country have been exposed by citizens who filmed the activities such as school violence, with their cellular phones.

The growth of the social media is also fuelled by the ownership of cellular phones.

Fourteen million people used the internet, with many doing so via cellular phones. By January 2013, there were more than six million registered Facebook users in South Africa, and over five million Twitter users, with over half tweeting from a mobile phone.

The growth of online media is another positive story of the past 20 years.

However, while there is so much for us to celebrate in broadcasting and telecommunications, let me hasten to add that more must still be done to promote diversity in the print media sector.

That is why tonight's event is so important, as it contributes to that important national task of promoting the diversity of ownership, content, management and staffing of our media industry.

With regards to ownership, the print media is still dominated by the Big 4 - Caxton, Naspers, Independent News and Media SA and the Times Media Group.

The Print and Digital Media SA reported in 2011 that only an average of 14 percent of ownership of the mainstream print media is in black hands, and that women participation in board and senior management is limited to 4 percent.

The amendments to the Broad based Black Economic Empowerment Act should pave the way for transformation in the print media sector in the entire value chain, publishing, printing, distribution, advertising and Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) certification.

The amendments to the Employment Equity Act should also encourage the industry to diversify the newsrooms. We need to reflect on what else we still need to do as South Africans, to develop a media sector that is truly South African and truly African.

We need a media sector that is an accurate mirror of ourselves regardless of race, colour, gender, class, creed or geographical location. A media sector that will tell the full South African story, and balance the challenges we face of unemployment, inequality and poverty, with the remarkable achievements that the country has also scored.

Very few countries have emerged from conflict and managed to build a thriving democracy, achieve peace and stability, fully functional democratic institutions and to build a new nation as we have done as South Africans, in a short space of time.

If we do not tell this story ourselves, and instead choose to be overly-critical and paint a wrong picture that our country is failing when it is not, we are doing South Africa and South Africans who work hard, a huge disservice.

We need to sit and debate a lot on these issues.

On the 5th of August 2011, I held my first consultative meeting with media owners, representing both print and the broadcasting industry, in a meeting held in Tshwane.

I welcomed the interaction with this important sector of South Africa's society, remarking that their products - from newspapers, magazines, to radio stations and television channels, provided a platform and mirror to project South African life and society. The media owners apprised me of their own challenges in the industry including regulatory constraints which they wanted to discuss further.

The meeting was introductory and set the tone for future engagements between the two parties, which would focus more on pressing issues such as media diversity and transformation, development and training as well as how media and government would work together to further strengthen Brand South Africa.

The Deputy President has also met with editors a few times to discuss important issues.

Sharing ideas can only make our media sector stronger and more vibrant and will take South Africa forward in a meaningful way.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We all have a role to play to build our country. This responsibility extends to the media. We are pleased therefore that the media plays an important and active role in nation building currently through the Lead SA Initiative launched by Independent Newspapers and Primedia Broadcasting.

In March last year, I launched the Stop Rape campaign in Mitchell's Plain in the Western Cape with Lead SA and the Department of Basic Education. We need to continue the education and awareness around Stop Rape.

The Lead SA "Drug Watch" campaign has made good inroads here in the Western Cape and in Gauteng. We must continue to fight the drug scourge at every level.

The other Lead SA programmes you have such as the a Bill of Responsibilities in our schools with the Department of Basic Education, Saving the Rhino, supporting and embracing Mandela Day and getting behind our national sporting teams needs to continue and be supported.

In celebrating 20 years of freedom, Lead SA and the Department of Arts and Culture, GCIS, Proudly SA and Brand SA have launched "Freedom Fridays".

Let's all be proud to show and express our South Africaness by supporting these initiatives. Another campaign is the promotion of voluntarism. The Lead SA call to do at least 20 hours of community volunteerism in 2014 as part of 20 years of freedom will make a difference.

In addition, the Crime Line 32211 SMS tip-off has led the South African Police Service to make thousands of arrests. Millions of rands of seizures have been made. This promotion of active citizenry is important and has our support.

Let's all join hands to move South Africa forward.

Compatriots,

This is an occasion of celebrating achievement. It is an occasion of looking forward to the future, a future of new voices and new perspectives, and the opening of a new marketplace of ideas in the many Independent group media products.

We congratulate Independent news and media for contributing to the diversification of media ownership. This is good for our country. It is yet another good story for us to tell!

We look forward to working with you, as we move South Africa forward in the next five years and beyond.

I thank you!

▪ **Deadline looms for MDDA-Sanlam Local Media Awards entries for 2014** 23 Jan 2015

▪ **MDDA-Sanlam Local Media Awards entries for 2014 now open** 26 Nov 2014

▪ **Entries open for MDDA-Sanlam Local Media Awards** 25 Nov 2014

▪ **Mandla Langa acknowledges 20 years of media freedom and diversity** 28 May 2014

▪ **MDDA-Sanlam Local Media Awards winners announced** 27 May 2014

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