

Media Freedom Day, 19 October

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Tuesday 19 October 2010 marked 33 years after 19 October 1977. South Africa is celebrating legislative guarantees of press freedom and editorial independence. South Africa has undergone profound political and economic transformation over the last 16 years, resulting in new and strong political institutions that underpin democracy and a macro economic framework that encourages greater freedom and competition. The Constitution Act of 1996 protects and provides for the freedom of the media, freedom of expression and access to information. This is further supported by the legislative framework giving effect to the constitution, including the MDDA Act of 2002, ICASA Act of 2000, Electronic Communications Act of 2005, Broadcasting Act of 1999, Access to Information Act of 2000, etc. including Chapter 9 of the Constitution which sets up institutions to support democracy.



The country has moved from racial discrimination to a non racial democracy where the rights of ordinary citizens are now protected and enshrined in a Constitution which provides a balance between the freedom of expression and the right to dignity and equality. Free speech and a free media are entrenched in the Constitution Act No. 108 of 1996 and the media operate in an environment free of oppression, persecution and the repressive legislation which sought to restrict and control the media. The democratic transition catapulted South Africa into playing a major role not only as a regional economic and political power in Africa, but also an influential player in the emerging markets. These dramatic changes are also reflected in the media industry. It is an industry characterized by a new energy of growth and greater access with a diversity of voices reflective of ethnic and racially diverse people.

It is therefore critical to appreciate the broader context, as we commemorate the 19th October 2010 and celebrating Media Freedom, to emphasize the significant role media can play in helping the different people to communicate with each other in order to strengthen our democracy, promote a culture of human rights and enable all to participate fully in our economic growth and speed up transformation and development. Information is knowledge and power.

This can only be achieved if every citizen (where ever s/he is located, rural or urban, poor or rich) has access to a choice of a diverse range of media. We should remember that media freedom is for all citizens and not just for us media practitioners. Media also provides a window of transparency in government and injects life to a country's economy by publishing financial and market information to citizens, allowing them to participate freely and fruitfully in their country's economy. Access to communication and information empowers citizens, facilitate participatory democracy, and assist in defending, advancing and deepening our democracy.

We must ensure that rural communities have access to all media including television services. We must ensure responsible journalism and that our media is transformed to reflect South Africa in every respect. We must also support and create an enabling environment for media development and diversity.

The MDDA has from its inception in 2004 supported more than 323 community and small commercial media projects (both broadcast and print), with approximately more than R118m in grants. As we all mark this day, the Agency firmly believes that the freedom of the press and diversity of the media is a pre-requisite for a flourishing democracy. The Agency will continue to provide support to the development of more voices in the media through funding, capacity building programmes, which enable and empower people to take control of their lives. This will of course enable them to shape their future as they see fit and completely transform their communities. This year provides an opportunity for all media in particular our print media to reflect and consider plans to further its transformation to reflect the South African society in all respect, ownership and control, management, content, journalistic skills, employment equity, access to advertising, etc.

The Agency take the opportunity to thank the Government (whose valuable support for the Agency through GCIS and the

Presidency has made its work manageable) and the funding partners of the MDDA [**SABC, Multichoice Africa (PTY) LTD, Primedia (PTY) LTD, MNET, etv (PTY) LTD, Jacaranda FM; East Coast Radio, MIDI TV, Algoa FM, OFM, Capricorn FM, YFM (PTY) LTD, Media 24 LTD, CTP Limited, Independent Newspapers LTD and AVUSA Media LTD**].

We look forward to signing new funding agreements with the new print media player (The New Age) which adds value to the noble objective of media diversity, and other broadcast service licensees (who have not yet signed the partnership) to join us in assisting the building of an environment where a diverse, vibrant and creative media flourishes and reflects the needs of all South Africans. Many Broadcasting Service Licensees have joined as partners from April 2009, contributing 0.2% of the annual turnover derived from the licensee's license activities to the MDDA, in line and in compliance with the ICASA Regulation: Prescribed annual contributions of licensees to the Universal Service and Access Fund (USAF) (Notice No. 31499) published on the 10th October 2008. The regulation as per the Electronic Communications Act No. 36 of 2005 recognize the relationship between broadcasters and the MDDA thereby provide that such contributions made to the MDDA will be set off against the prescribed annual contribution to the USAF.

▪ **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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The Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) is a statutory development agency for promoting and ensuring media development and diversity.

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