

Govt response on Cannes visit

Government has issued a statement in response to questions raised in parliament this week, about its delegation to the Cannes Film Festival, stating that the benefit was to local filmmakers who had the chance to network with their international counterparts.

In response to a written question, on South Africa's participation in the Cannes Film Festival, posed by the DA MP, Diane Kohler-Barnard, Minister ZP Jordan, Minister of Arts and Culture, gave the following overview and answer:

"South Africa's initial official presence at this Festival was co-ordinated by the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology in 1997. Three years later, in 2000, the Department launched its Strategy for the Film Industry in Cannes. It also launched the newly formed statutory body, the National Film and Video Foundation, NFVF. The NFVF secured the South African Pavilion in the International Village, the Market section of the festival, in 2001. This Pavilion is the first and to date the only African Pavilion in the Market section of the Festival.

"At Cannes 2004, the South African film industry stood head and shoulders with countries that have been participating at the festival for much longer. Cannes is the premier platform for showcasing film products and industries through either completed programmes or projects in development. The Festival and Market provide film practitioners with an opportunity to buy, sell, finance and promote their ideas in development and their film products. Cannes presents an unmatched opportunity with international role-players and stakeholders and other filmmakers.

"Experiencing Cannes is a learning curve in the development of any film practitioner wanting to see how the best market works and how films and industries are promoted.

"Equipped with facilities for hosting film screenings and meetings as well as a good communication system, the South African Pavilion has become a home for South Africans, people from the continent and the Diaspora. Over 200 scheduled meetings were held here between South African film practitioners and their international counterparts.

"This year the Pavilion hosted the opening of the South African film Retrospective, the AGORA press conferences with leading actors: Danny Glover, Lynn Wheatfield and Valdi Curtis Hall as well as film makers from Cuba, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Burkina Faso and Brazil.

"The South African delegation at Cannes 2004 was headed by the Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture, Ntombazana Botha who opened the SA Film Retrospective at the Pavilion. The DAC delegation included Deputy Director-General, Thandiwe January MacLean; Acting Chief Director, Tale Motsepe; Chief Financial Officer, Itumeleng Letsebe; Assistant Director, Pertunia Tshweu; Deputy Director, Lebone Maema; as well as Melanie Hess, Personal Assistant to the Deputy Minister. The officials accompanied the Deputy Minister and facilitated meetings with international stakeholders and government

counterparts.

"The South African events and meetings programme at Cannes 2004 were largely coordinated by the National Film and Video Foundation in collaboration with the departments of Arts and Culture, Trade and Industry as well as the Industrial Development Corporation, South African Tourism, South African Airways and the South African Embassy in Paris.

"The Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture, Ntombazana Botha met with the Minister of Arts and Culture from the UK in preparation for continued cultural collaboration including a co-production treaty or a memorandum of agreement for the film industry.

"The NFVF signed a memorandum of agreement with the CNC (the French equivalent of the NFVF) and had numerous follow up meetings, especially with the Canadian, Italian and German delegations. South Africa currently has co-production treaties with both Canada and Italy and will be signing the German Treaty in November 2004 at Sithengi in Cape Town. Meetings also took place between the NFVF and the Venice Film Festival, the Genoa Festival and the Toronto Film Festival. All three Festivals will have a special focus on South Africa this year, showcasing the local films and profiling the local industry as part of the 10 year celebration of democracy.

"The biggest Film Festival on the African continent, Fespaco, which takes place on a bi-annual basis in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso will also host a special programme on the South African film industry.

"Apart from leading producers and directors interested in working with South Africa the guest list for these events included representatives from the following government aligned organisations, British Film Council, Australian Film Commission, Swedish Film Institute, Telefilm Canada, German Film Fund, New Zealand Film Fund, Ireland Film Fund, Centre National du Cinematography, as well as Italian and Hollywood Partners.

"The true benefit from the Cannes exercise have been experienced by the filmmakers themselves as they had the opportunity to network with their counterparts, sell their completed products internationally and secure co-production and financing partners and attend numerous workshops and presentations."

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