The SABC Editorial Forum

 Auckland Park

 2006

 Date: 31 August 2020

To: The Portfolio Committee on Communications

 The Parliament of the Republic of South Africa

Attention: The Committee Chairperson

Per mail: hsalie@parliament.gov.za,tngoma@parliament.gov.za

**RE: Further information requested in respect of interaction with Committee on 22 July 2020**

As was requested of the SABC News Editorial Forum during our appearance before the Portfolio Committee on 22 July 2020, we hereby submit our written supplement to our presentation. Our response to each of the Committee’s questions is as follows:

1. **The understanding of differences between commercial and public mandates of the SABC**

**1.**The editorial staff of the SABC once again finds itself having to fight for the protection of the public service mandate, this time against commercialisation, which is likely to erode the gains that have been made after many years of corrosive editorial interference in the Newsroom. What we seek to describe below, is the distinction between the need to serve a public good versus the attempt to subvert this service when it is viewed primarily, asa commodity. We submit that the failure to treat news as a public good,naturally undermines the public mandate to inform and educate a diverse spectrum of audiences across all languages and regions of South Africa, regardless of their social status, and without fear or favour. This is because where commercialisation is the primary interest, decisions about newsworthiness and content in general are greatly influenced bythe profit motive, rather than the need to serve all sectors of society so that they can make informed decisions, in the interest of democracy. Here our concernis whether there is an appreciation of the sacrosanct space meant to deliver the public mandate, and the awareness that any tampering with that space, in pursuit of profit-making is itself a subversion of democracy.

**2.**In terms of the Broadcasting Act of 1999, provision has been made for the establishment of both public and commercial services within the Corporation which “must be separately administered."We believe the drafters sought to make this distinction in order to protect the public mandate, and to allow the SABC to use proceeds from the commercial services to fund and enable the public mandate.

**3.**Although on the surface, the Act seems to make a clear separation between these two divisions, upon closer inspection, the wording fails to live up to the spirit of protecting the public, as may have been intended by the drafters. We believe, this is where the problem lies and needs to be attended.

**4.**The Act correctly enjoins the Corporation, in terms of its public service mandate, to among others, make services available to South Africans in all official languages;reflect both the unity and diverse cultures; provide significant news and public affairs programming which meets  the highest standards of journalism, as well as fair and unbiased coverage, impartiality, balance and independence from government, commercial and other interests.

**5.**However, upon closer inspection, the Act falls short of making an important clinical separation between these two divisions, because Part 3 of the Act (10) 2, also provides for the Corporation to draw revenues from advertising and sponsorships, among others, opening up space for commercial considerations where the public mandate is concerned.

**6.**There is a conflict in the intent and our submission is that this incongruitydoes not help the drive to protect the public mandate, especially when it comes to the Newsroom. The failure to ring-fence this division, makes it vulnerable, among others, to decisions made on the whims of whoever is in charge, which is what we believe is the philosophy behind the proposed new Newsroom structure. The power of commerce and the needs to increase revenues will supercede the obligation to provide news in the public interest.

**7.**Given the fact that commercialisation relies on the pursuit of revenues, which in turnis fundamentally about profit-maximisation, from a normative and practical sense, it is difficult to see how the public mandate can be effectively fulfilled, where the Newsroom is not ring-fenced. Decisions about News content willbe made on the basis of whether they will bring in viewership or not, and not on the basis of their value to the public interest.

**8.**The Broadcasting Act defines the commercial broadcasting service as a **“**broadcasting service operating for profit or as part of a profit entity but excludes any broadcasting service provided by a public broadcasting licensee.” Clause 11 (e) of the Act says the Corporation’s commercial service must be operated in an efficient manner so as to maximise the revenues  provided to its shareholder.

**9.**In McQuail (2010) one learns that the term ‘commercial’, applied as an adjective to some types of media provision, is a question in essence, about the pursuit of competitive markets, as opposed to a consideration about providing a public good. The writer adds that “commercial content is likely, from this perspective, to be more oriented to amusement and entertainment (escapism). In addition, it tends to be“more superficial, undemanding and conformist, more derivative and standardised.”

**10.**Essentially, public broadcasting is about accountability to the public and the building of democracy. From a critical political economy perspective, where room is open for commercial interests to be pursued, Mc Quail (2010) argues that legitimately, a question must then be asked about where control lies if profit and not mandate is the driver of decisions. According to him, the following questions are pertinent:

* Are the media under control?
* If so, who controls the media and in whose interest?
* Whose version of the world (social reality) is presented?
* How effective are the media in achieving chosen ends?
* Do mass media promote more or less equality in society?
* How is access to media allocated or obtained?

**11.**Our view is that, even though the drafters of the Act attempted to make a separation between the public and commercial services of the Corporation, they have not succeeded in coming up with a clinical division that would conveniently separate the two so as not to obstruct the public mandate. This is because of the introduction of a window through which revenue-generation considerations could be made within the public service mandate. In the context of the newsroom, this is a dangerous provision which we have already seen debilitating the public mandate, as certain editorial decisions are made on the basis of whether desired content has potential to bring in revenues, as opposed to whether it is a public good and which the public has a right to receive.

**12.**Some recent examples of how the public mandate was displaced in the Newsroom, in the interest of revenue-generation, are as follows:

* In early 2018, at SAFM, the station management and the SABC Executive argued that current affairs was not drawing audiences and not making money. As a result, they reduced the current affairs hours. Even though the station removed the current affairs time slots, they replaced them with their own replica of Current Affairs, but mainly driven by talk format, in the same slots. Currents Affairs had the following  time slots before the changes:
* AM Live (06h00-09h00)
* Midday Live (12h00-13h00)
* PM Live (16h00-18h00)
* Weekend Live (06h00-09h00) Saturday
* Weekend Live (06h00-08h00) Sunday
* The morning show (05h00 -06h00)

The main concern in this instance is that News has been relegated to graveyard slots as mandates that are insignificant. There is hardly any news slots thatoccupy prime time slots.

The new slots were replaced as follows:

* The Midday show (12h00-13h00)
* The weekend show, both Saturday and Sunday (06h00-07h00)
* The morning show was in fact moved from the prime-time 6am slot, to 5am, which denies audiences the right to know as many are not available to listen at that time. This clearly demonstrates that the SABC is not attaching any importance to current affairs, but is willing to do anything to increase revenues, even if it is at the expense of the public’s right to information.
* At Lesedi FM, the midday show was reduced from an hour to 30 minutes.
* It is important to note that as opposed to talk shows, the current affairs programmes included packages that reflected the voices and views of ordinary people on matters affected them. This has all been reduced or completely done away with.
* To demonstrate the insatiable appetite for profit, we attach an email correspondence with an accompanying scheduling document**,** wherein a current affairs programme on MunghanaLonene was demonstrably performing well, but the station still wasn’t content and wanted to take that hour from current affairs, to the commercial platform in order to further increase revenues. That didn’t succeed because they couldn’t justify the takeover. (**Annexure A)**
* From what we understand from the new News structure that intends to collapse some of the SABC’s offices, i.e. in Cape Town, the George office will be closed. This office was specifically opened to service the community between Port Elizabeth and Cape Town, because it is located 400 kilometers from the CT CBD and it is impossible for the CT office to do justice in the coverage of those communities from that far. In the Eastern Cape, the Bisho office is being closed and is expected to be covered by Mthatha, which is about 300 kilometers away. There is no logic, except a commercial one, that could influence this kind of decision-making. There was a reason why these offices had to be structured in the manner that they have, for instance, the Bisho office was specifically opened to cover then provincial legislature and the rural areas that fell under the former Ciskei area. This profit-seeking motive forces us tocollapseour broader operations while at the same serves to undermine the various cultures, languages and voices that deserve to be heard from those diverse communities.

**13.**The South African society remains unequal, there is still a wealthy few that has access to many forms of media and the majority poor whose only choice is the SABC. The public mandate is meant to ensure that they are not kept out of news and information dynamics just because of thislack. Their ideas about society should not be shaped by those who have power and resources, but by a free-flow of accessible, unfettered and independent information. This is the mandate of the SABC and it must be protected.

**14.**As the Editorial Forum, we believe that a lot is at stake in our democracy, and we cannot subject the SABC Newsroom to a situation where only economic control and attendant logic are determinants of what makes News. Whenaudiences are commodified this not only results in decrease in real diversity, but also perpetuates the marginalisation of alternative voicesas the public mandate getssubordinated to private/or monied minority interests.

**15.**We implore Parliament as public representatives to review the Broadcasting Act in order to properly separate and ring-fence the Newsroom from commercial services. It is with this in mind that we also ask you honourable members, to speed up the debate around the funding model of the public broadcaster, so that the often cited excuse of lack of resources shouldn’t push the Corporation to make decisions that inadvertently go against the spirit of a public service. A proper funding model would assist in ensuring that in drafting legislation such as the Broadcasting Act, the drafters are not compelled to make expedient provisions for the sustainability of the Corporation, which may be contrary to the requirements of a public service operation.

**16.**In light of the above issues, it is our view that we should all jealously guard the public mandate, with the understanding that critical thinking is not the priviledge of the schooled or monied, but that the general public must have access to unbiased,quality information, in order to enable them to make critical decisions about the society they wish to live in. The pursuit of a commercial model for the SABC Newsroom will be a perpetuation of the injustice on the already disempowered population that only relies on it.

**17.**This also introduces conflict among Editorial management staff who in running a duo-missioned venture have to pursue journalistic objectives as well as commercial goals.

1. **Must respond in writing to the Committee on its understanding of the relevance of the Skills Audit to the Section 189 process;**

**1.**It is our considered view that indeed, the Skills Audit is relevant to the Section 189 process, because of the realities on the ground. In fact this position was made by the SABC before it made an unexplained about turn. Please see attached article:

* <https://www.sabc.co.za/sabc/sabc-update-on-the-section-189-of-the-lra-process/>
* <https://themediaonline.co.za/2019/02/staff-cuts-sabc-wont-renew-section-189-notice-ahead-of-skills-audit/>
* <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2019-01-31-sabc-halts-retrenchments-as-it-embarks-on-skills-audit/>

**2.**We find it irrational that the SABC Executive says the skills audit process is not meant to inform the Section 189 process, which entails retrenchments.

**3.**On the 18th of June, the SABC issued a notice of possible job redundancy/retrenchments. We are of the view that pruning 600 permanent employees, and 1,200 freelancers without having established your skills base, and how it enhances or diminishes the company’s ability to achieve its goals, is irrational because it is putting the cart before the horse.

**4.** Our view is that this will deprive the broadcaster of relevant skills and undermine our public mandate. Without an ample skills audit what would inform retrenchment and any new structure?

**5.** Having found the current flawed process confusing and incomplete, we therefore suggest its replacement with an all-encompassing, fair and authentic process.To prove that the current process was flawed, we attach emails to the effect that:

* Staff raised concerns with both senior editorial management, HR and the external service provider about the irrelevance of the questionnaire of the skills audit

**(Annexures B – B1)**

**6.**Allow us to further share with you our bewilderment at the pending retrenchment exercise. The Television News Channel 404 has a staff compliment that is ¾ freelance. All programmes in the TV Current Affairs section have for the past 5 years been chorusing the same call “we have only skeleton staff”. Therefore you can see how we are in dire need of an explanation for why we will have to retrench staff. It is only by adhering to a progressive management norm namely, consultancy or discourse, that a quandary such as ours can dissipate. In other words, how SABC has come to the conclusion we are over staffed is a question that needs to be convincingly answered within the corporation.

1. **Must respond in writing and in detail reports on claims of sabotage about President Ramaphosa’s address to the nation;**

**1.**As much as the SABC repeatedly announced there was strong evidence of sabotage in this case, no member of staff was charged with sabotage.

**2.**Instead the staff was handed different charges altogether.

1. Charge 1: Negligence alternatively dereliction of duty
2. Charge 2: Bringing the SABC into disrepute

 **(Annexure C)**

**3.** Please note thatthis employeewas the only ne among the four, who was dismissed as a result of the above charges.

**4.**Contrary to what parliament was informed by the CEO, the matter was concluded. The current court case that we are aware of, is of defamation opened by one employee against the SABC, for its claim that they had sabotaged the President.

**5.**Given the SABC’s repeated claim that there was prima facie evidence to the effect that this was sabotage, the failure to present such evidence anywhere obligates the Corporation to retract and apologise publicly to the President, nation and its staff.

**5.**We note the SABC’s continued hedging in providing answers to three basic questions:

* What were the charges proffered upon the 4 employees?
* Was evidence of sabotage presented during the disciplinary hearings?
* What were the findings and conclusions of the disciplinary hearings?

**6.**We request that Parliament not allow the SABC’s obfuscations and insist that they provide answers to these three basic questions.

1. **Should provide to the Committee their expectation of reskilling and upskilling of employees in anticipation of digital broadcasting platforms;**

**1.**The SABC launched its new Target Operating Model on 11 June 2020 in a virtual staff redifussion by GCEO, Madoda Mxakwe. The following week, on 18 June 2020, the SABC issued the Section 189 notice from the GCEO via Corporate Communications.

**2.**A “proposed divisional structure” meeting - one of a number of similar sessions - was held with a group of News employees on 30 June 2020. It was presented by News: GE Phathiswa Magopeni and head of News HR, Mannie Alho. The document presented was a draft and staff was informed that the structure is "fluid" and subject to change. There have since been no further consultations and the new structure remains unconfirmed to employees.

**3.**The second part of the skills audit (the survey component) conducted in June 2020 is flawed. This has been confirmed, in writing, by the service provider when queried by News staff.

**4.**With an unconfirmed organisational structure and a defective skills audit survey that does not capture the true abilities and skills of employees, it is difficult to align current skills and identify the gaps where employees may need to be reskilled or upskilled in digital broadcasting platforms in the future.

**5.**However, the above is not to say that SABC employees do not already have digital skills.

**6.**The SABC has a Learning and Development Department. Employees’ training needs are identified by their respective departments and submitted to Learning and Development.

**7.**There is also a culture of knowledge sharing and in-house training. For example, the SABC Digital News Department facilitates and trains colleagues from the traditional platforms and also develops related educational material, standard operating procedure guides and best practices. In addition, SABC Digital News holds a weekly training and demo session meeting that is open to all to attend.

**8.**There is a great deal of R&D and experimentation that takes place within the News division at SABC. News employees do not wait to be upskilled - they actively seek skill improvement and share what they have learnt with their colleagues too.

**9.**Unfortunately, there are obstacles to staff showcasing their skills fully. Obstacles include outdated equipment and software, lack of tools of trade and lack of resources.

* **Example A**

A department sends their staff for training. Staff returns to work after completing it, but cannot put their new skills to use because the hardware and operating system of the devices/machines/equipment are old and incompatible with the new software that staff have been trained on.

* **Example B**

The SABC Digital News Department has repeatedly requested new multimedia equipment since 2013. It eventually received this equipment in 2017 after a resubmitted request in 2016.

* **Example C**

At present,65% of the SABC Digital News Department staff does not have tools of trade to work from home during COVID-19 despite being instructed to do so. Laptops are currently being procured, but the Department has been informed that not everyone will be a recipient. Sourcing available pool laptops from the SABC has not yielded positive results because they are outdated and will not be of adequate service. The Department has also been advised by News HR that there is no work from home policy and that the SABC do not offer an equipment allowance. While the SABC has provided mi-fi routers, the data is insufficient and employees constantly have to request top-ups in order for them to work.

* **Example D**

There are many forward-thinking and innovative employees at SABC who are at the gate of new technologies. However, they cannot open this gate easily because it involves a lengthy process full of red tape.

For instance, the SABC does not recognise online subscription payments for third party tools. Also, should the cost of a service or product be above a certain amount, it must go to Treasury.

The SABC wants to be agile and work in the digital space, but to enable it to do so, such processes must be reassessed otherwise it will continue to be left behind by its competitors.

* **Example E**

The SABC Digital News Department conducted research in 2018 to compare SABC’s online properties’ resources with those of Media24.

**10.** As a result, News staff continues to incur personal costs because they have had to purchase their own equipment, data and make arrangements in order to work. In some extreme cases, staff members use their personal smartphones to complete their work.

Using data from 2017, the results show how SABC cannot compete because of its lack of resources. Media24 employs one computer scientist per five editorial staff while SABC has two developers, in the entire organisation, to take care of all of its online properties. Unfortunately, the situation still has not changed for SABC. Please see attached slides and reference links below.

1. *Media24 achieves growth in digital media and e-commerce*
<https://www.media24.com/media24-achieves-strong-growth-ecommerce-digital-media/>or
2. <https://www.mediaupdate.co.za/media/142416/media24-achieves-growth-in-digital-media-and-e-commerce>

2. [*State of the Newsroom 2017* | *Fakers and Makers*](http://journalism.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/906-STATE-OF-THE-NEWSROOM-2018-REPRINT-V3.pdf)

**11.** The SABC insists that its proposed structure will be enabled through digital technology for better coordination of workflows. However, this structure was not informed by consultations at least with the News Digital Department, despite the staff’s many years of experience and knowledge acquired through improvisation, which should be helpful in informing the SABC of the future. It is not clear where the Executive, including the GE of News, got the information that contributed to the new News structure, in order to make it digitally-ready.

**12.**While employees can be upskilled and/or reskilled, it is critical that the SABC environment, infrastructure and resources must enable employees to perform optimally.

* 1. **Provide concrete plans on how the SABC can deal with the matter of a bloated staff;**
1. Our firm view is that the SABC Newsroom is not bloated, it has 748 permanent staff and 398 freelancers. Theseare staff producingRadio, TV and digital services in all official languages, across all provinces. These are Editorial, technical and administrative staff, a minute number for what is Africa’s largest broadcaster. We should keep in mind our core business cannot be sub-contracted as would most of what is identified as commercial services.
2. The BBC, which the SABC has mirrored itself against since its post 1993 transformation, employed about 22 500 employees as at 2019, servicing a UK population of 66, 65 million people. Its News Department, employed 3500 with 2000 journalists. On the other hand, the SABC services57, 78 million people, close to the same population serviced by the BBC. Considering the geographic space, development levels and the maturing democracy that South Africa still grapples with, it is clear that the SABC has much more responsibility to ensure that it plays a developmental role in the socio-economic and political development of the country. Added to that, the SABC as a public broadcaster, services a country which is a member state of SADC and the African Union. This means that it should not only aspire to play a role that is confined toits geographical borders, but also has an obligation to reflect African stories and influence the general global narrative about Africa as a continent. It also means that the SABC has to aim to reach the 1, 2 billion population of Africa if it’s going to be taken seriously by the world.
3. We note the SABC’s insistence that the News wage bill is 93% of the News budget, and its argument is that this is unsustainable.However, the budget itself is inadequate. Thatobservation is therefore immaterial, as crucial staffing decisions cannot be made on the basis of an inadequate budget. If one juxtaposes this with the BBC example provided above, it is clear that what we should be discussing is a solution outside the current box that the SABC wants to confine us in, which is the dire lack of resources, and not the pruning of staff to satisfy an abnormal situation. We cannot normalize an abnormal situation by making an argument that is not based on an honest analysis of the situation. The energy that the SABC is spending on pruning staff, should be the energy that they spend in coming up with a business model that will be fit for purpose, for Africa’s largest broadcaster. Crucial operational decisions cannot be made on the basis of what is essentially a miniscule budget, considering the mandate at hand.
4. It is a fact that currently, editorial staff is inadequate to meet the mandate. We need to interrogate what an appropriate budget for Africa’s largest newsroom should be and after that how do we raise it. Please consider the examples below, as a demonstration that the SABC Newsroom is not bloated as management would like Parliament and the country to believe:
5. The SABC’s long-running investigative documentary programme, Special Assignment, has been suffering not only from a human but also a financial resource shortage, a situation that has completely crippled its ability to deliver on its mandate. Currently, the programme only has 2 experienced producers and one junior producer, where it should have at least 6 experienced producers, to be able to investigate and break stories as per its mandate. Endless requests for staff have not been acted upon, on the basis that there are no financial resources. For the past four years at least, staff has had to improvise to do investigations, using their own resources, in order to ensure that decent programmes are put on air. Of late, the programme has had to air numerous repeats to augment the gaps as current staff is completely exhausted after overworking themselves to protect the brand. It has become a seriously exploitative environment which is tantamount to serious labour rights abuses.
6. The News Camera Department has been swimming in a disaster for years with no end in sight. As an example, the Current Affairs Television Department has 18 programmes, which are serviced by only 7 camera persons because of the staff shortage in that department. For programmes that have to churn out stories every day, or every week, it’s literally a first come first served scenario, where many are often told cameras are all booked. Despite this, management expects fresh programmes on air. As such, various producers make plans to shoot their programmes, some with cellphones and others with digicams, which means the quality is often compromised as the majority have not had training on professional camera work. Some programmes go on air incomplete because producers are forced to conclude the shoot in a short space of time. Worse conditions exist in the regions in their various Camera Departments.
7. As a result of the above, the Camera Department staff is overworked, often work double shifts, they cannot take leave and by the end of the year they are owed 2 to 3 months of leave. This also means that their rights are being violated as not all of them can be allowed to go on leave at the same time and therefore leave productions unattended. The camera staff is exhausted, because of this situation; the quality of its work is sometimes compromised, affecting the credibility of programmes.
8. Most, if not all Executive Producers of programmes, have to double up as Producers due to this serious lack of staff. This means that the oversight editorial work that they need to do, suffers as their focus is mainly on ensuring that there are new programmes on air each week. This as opposed to ensuring that proper due diligence is done from an editorial, legal, production and aesthetic point of view. For example, the Executive Producer of the Sesotho Current Affairs programme, Leihlo La Sechaba, has had to carry three positions at the same time, without even being compensated for the extra two. She’s had to be Executive Producer, Producer and Presenter when her staff member had a family crisis, because there were no funds to bring in a stand-in Presenter. Producing for the Executive Producers of Special Assignment and Leihlo La Sechaba, has become a pattern as if it’s a requirement when it’s actually exploitation to its highest level without any hope that the situation will normalize anytime soon.
9. Due to the dire situation, the quality of programmes is negatively affected and it gets exacerbated when someone falls ill. This explains the number of repeats that some programmes have had to air, not only violating our ICASA license conditions, but also denting the credibility of our programmes in general.
10. The above examples are a norm in many of our programmes and the GE of News is aware of the crippling environment that the Newsroom has to operate under. That she continues to agree with the Executive that the Newsroom is bloated, is beyond comprehension. Proof of the above is available upon request. We urge Parliament to also challenge the SABC’s bloated newsroom narrative, which is definitely not based on facts.
11. **The Editorial Forum must report in writing its level of involvement in the running of the SABC;**

**1.**The Forum has been in existence since 2017 and is constitutedby all regions of the SABC, both at editorial management and general staff levels. It was borne out of the need to insulate the Newsroom from editorial interference and give editorial staff the voice to reject illegal instructions that seek to deproffessionalise them and undermine South Africa’s democracy. This model was borrowed from the German Public Broadcasters, who have a similar history of censorship and information control asApartheid South Africa.

**2.**Since its establishment, the Forum has requested and held meetings with the Chairperson of the Board, the GCEO of the SABC and the GE of News where serious issues were discussed and important decisions were taken.

**3.**Though the Forum continues to meet and raise issues of editorial importance it awaits the day it will be formally incorporated into the operational work chain of our news desk.

**4.**We may currently have a good boss but what happens when we have a bad one like in very recent history?The Forum is a solution that is democratically appropriateand reassures staff their constitutional rights will not be arbitrarily abrogated again.

**5.**SABC Management cites external watchdog bodies such as ICASA and the BCCSA as some kind of substitute for the Forum’s professional tasks. Therein lies a lack of understanding of newsroom operations and journalism ethics. ICASA and the BCCSA can never supervise Newsroom operations as this would be interference, something every journalist has to perpetually be aware of. They are only allowed to intercede after the fact.

**6.**The Forum is the pre-requisite internal dredger. The fact that the SABC Management, with the concurrence of both the GE of News and the News Sub-committee of the Board, keep referring to these examples as measures of protecting the Newsroom against interference is a source of serious concern as it points to only two possibilities: that management does not know how the newsroom operates and that they do not care about protecting the public mandate as well as ensuring editorial independence.

**7.**The Forum is designed so as to protect staff and newsroom operations from interference, external or internal, the kind of which resulted in the illegal and unjust dismissal of editorial staff four years ago for resisting this very interference.

**8.**Given the colossal obligations of a Public Broadcaster, staff’s need to practice professionally cannot be left to any one office holder’s solicitude, to say nothing about such an individual’s whims, the latter something very real for us because we repeat, we experienced it just four years ago. It would be not only more expedient but in line with our Public Mandate to hand this immense responsibility to a broader therefore more objective operational body such as the Editorial Forum. In essence, the Forum is the staff itself, which has a stake in maintaining its professional integrity.

**9.**We want to reiterate that the Forum is designed to be operational and not post factum as how the SABC management’s alternative of News Sub-committee/ICASA/BCCSA would inescapably function. You will observe that these structures,by their nature and location, cannot be involved in daily operational matters. It therefore would be almost irrelevant when a journalist is wrongly ordered not to cover a service delivery protest. Let us also keep in mind, deadlines are a factor in the newsroom and such decisions cannot wait for external people to convene before they are made.

1. **Must share with the Committee the list of its members that have contracted or tested positive for COVID-19;**

We attach a dated record of Covid infections only as far as it concerns the SABC Newsroom.

SABC News COVID 19 Cumulative cases: March 2020 to 19 August 2020

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Province** | **Total Number of cases for 19/08/2020** | **Deaths** |
| Eastern Cape (PE, Bisho, Mthatha) | 7 | 0 |
| Free State | 3 | 0 |
| Gauteng (Auckland Park) | 36 | 0 |
| Gauteng (Pretoria) | 1 | 0 |
| KwaZulu Natal | 3 | 0 |
| Limpopo | 1 | 0 |
| North West | 2 | 0 |
| Mbombela | 0 | 0 |
| Northern Cape | 1 | 0 |
| Western Cape (incl Parliament) | 1 | 0 |
| **Total** | **55** | **0** |

Thanking you again for your time and the opportunity to address you, honourable members.

**The SABC Staff Editorial Forum**