

PRESENTATION TO THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS

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Introduction

- The SACP welcomes the opportunity afforded to us by the committee to make our presentation.
- We would also like to appraise the committee for their speedy reaction to the public outcry on the matters related to the current board of the SABC.

Context (1)

- The role of the SABC must be informed by the context of broader South African history of colonialism, capitalism and apartheid which permeated all facets of society including the media.
- The SACP does not accept the view that the media is a neutral arbiter and analyst of society seemingly above and outside of ongoing contestation and struggles. In the view of the SACP, the ownership and control of South African media is not immune from the influence of those who command financial and other resources.
- The legacy of colonialism, capitalism and apartheid is reflected not only in the patterns of media ownership and control, including imbalances within the newsrooms, but also in the lack of access to alternative media platforms and institutions for the majority of South Africans who are, in fact, overwhelmingly economically disempowered as the unemployed poor or exploited workers.
- The overall impact of the above is the unrepresentative established view and story line that dominates South African media.

Context (2)

- The SABC plays a critical role in shaping opinions and building societal values, including the moral fibre of our society, socio-economic transformation and the building of a united, patriotic nation. All these mean that the SABC is and must remain a public and social good.
- The SABC cannot, therefore, pretend to be above these race, class and gender realities and contestation. In order for the SABC to belong to the South African public and reflect its identity and diverse nature, then the SABC should mirror the society it reports about. It cannot be detached from the transformation agenda which seeks to address race, gender and class inequalities we inherit from apartheid.
- How the SABC Board is appointed and what measures are put in place to exercise oversight on that board, including dismissing non-performing board members and the dissolution of the board are all issues that we therefore cannot be addressed from the above-mentioned context.

Particulars of proposed legislation

The legislation seeks to amend the Broadcasting Act, No 4 of 1999, so as to insert-

- i) a provision for the removal of a member of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) Board by the appointing body on the recommendation of the National Assembly, and
- ii) a provision for the dissolution of the SABC Board.



Objects of the proposed legislation

- i) The Broadcasting Act does not provide for a mechanism whereby the SABC Board may be dissolved if it is unable to perform its functions; - ***our view is that the current proposals should not be viewed as a vindictive means to remedy an unpalatable situation in terms of the manner in which this board was appointed and its lack of representation.***
- ii) The Act only provides for the removal of individual members of the Board upon the recommendation of the Board itself - ***this is a situation that as the SACP we have found to be completely untenable. We greatly welcome measures to remedy this situation.***
- iii) The amendment would ensure that due process is followed when there is a need for the Board as a whole to be dissolved and also provides for the responsibilities of the Board to be executed by an interim Board until the appointment of a new Board. - ***the proposed amendments whilst taking care of the issues raised and we agree, however does not clearly spell out on how the public can initiate a process of dissolution of the board.***



International Comparison



Overview of Canadian Broadcasting Act

1. Board of Directors:

“There shall be a Board of Directors of the Corporation consisting of twelve directors, including the Chairperson and the President, to be appointed by the Governor in Council.”

2. Tenure:

“A director shall be appointed to hold office during good behaviour for a term not exceeding five years and may be removed at any time by the Governor in Council for cause.”

3. Accountability of Corporation to Parliament

“The Corporation is ultimately accountable, through the Minister, to Parliament for the conduct of its affairs.”

THANK YOU!!