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Monitoring the media since 1993

Submission to Parliament Portfolio Committee on Communication on the Draft Broadcasting Act Amendment Bill ("the Bill")

25 July 2008

Submission by the Media Monitoring Project

Introduction

The Media Monitoring Project (MMP) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee on the Draft Broadcasting Act Amendment Bill ("the Bill"). MMP is a founding member of the civil society coalition, Save our SABC – Reclaiming Our Public Broadcaster. It is to be noted that this submission is to be read in conjunction with the coalition submission, and thus we fully support the content and aims of the Submission. We reiterate the coalition and submission's position that the draft amendment bill is a short-term temporary measure that seeks to resolve immediate issues, and begins the longer-term process of restoring the credibility and integrity of a key public institution including a comprehensive review of all related legislation.

Given the history of the SABC as an instrument of political propaganda, and given that we are still in the process of entrenching South Africa's democracy, issues of trust and credibility, and independence from political interference, must be addressed. Public concern exists over political interference in the appointment and operation of the SABC Board and Organisation. Whether or not this interference is real or simply a perception does not mean that it should not be addressed as a matter of urgency, as perception itself undermines the credibility and integrity of the public broadcaster, and ultimately undermines citizen trust in a fundamental public institution.

In line with the core principle of independence in public service broadcasting, and in addition to the coalition's submission, the Media Monitoring Project proposes the following addition to the Bill, specifically requiring the exclusion of political parties from nominating SABC board members:

Draft Replacement Section: Broadcasting Act Amendment Bill [2008]

The following amendments are hereby effected in the Broadcasting Act, 1999

1. Amendments to section 13 in Act 4 of 1999

(a) After "process" in section 13(2)(a) insert "and that senior public officials and political parties and/or office bearers are not permitted to make such nominations";

(The underlined phrases are what is proposed to be inserted)

The Media Monitoring Project hereby requests allocated time for an oral presentation during the public hearing on the bill to expand further on the importance of this submission as well as related elements coalition's submission.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at the numbers above should there be any queries over our submission.

Yours sincerely,

William Bird
Director
Media Monitoring Project