

The "Save our SABC: Reclaiming our Public Broadcaster Campaign"
77 First Ave
Melville
2092

Chair of the Portfolio Committee on Communications
Mr Ismail Vadi

Cc: The State President and the Minister of Communications

17 June 2008

Dear Mr. Vadi

Removal of SABC Board, appointment of an interim Board, Parliamentary investigation into the SABC's financial and other crises and public broadcasting policy and legislative review process

The "Save our SABC" Campaign representing COSATU, Communications Workers Union, the Treatment Action Campaign, a host of NGOs and CBOs including the Freedom of Expression Institute, Media Monitoring Africa, the Media Institute of Southern Africa and the National Community Radio Forum, as well as a number of academic and independent experts, believe that it is imperative for Parliament to take **immediate and urgent** steps at this juncture to resolve the crisis around the SABC. Parliament needs to implement the Broadcasting Act, 1999, as amended earlier this year by immediately investigating and removing the SABC Board.

The composition of the present board is illegal. First, there was political interference in its initial appointment. Second, the Chair has been appointed by the board itself, instead of by the President, as required by law. Also, most importantly, due to the resignation of seven Board members, the Board has ceased to be quorate. The present board is therefore effectively dysfunctional and cannot take any legally binding decisions. Given the situation outlined above Parliament is therefore in a strong position to remove the Board.

SOS believes that once the Board has been removed, an independent interim board must urgently be recommended by Parliament to the President. The members of the interim Board must have the requisite broadcasting, financial and corporate governance skills to stabilise the affairs at the SABC. The interim board's mandate requires it to tighten the financial controls and accountability at the SABC and ensure that the corporation meets its debts, particularly to staff and independent producers.

After its short-term tenure (which cannot exceed 6 months) a new independent board must then be appointed according to the highest standards of indisputable public involvement and proven ability in relation to the knowledge and skills needed to rebuild an independent public broadcasting institution that will serve the South African public fully and inclusively across its social, economic and political diversity. This appointment process must be begun immediately. The era of political parties or factions appointing loyalists to safeguard narrow political objectives to the detriment of the broader public interest must decisively be brought to an end.

Further to appointing the interim board and new permanent board, it is imperative that Parliament hold in-depth hearings into the financial and other crises, at the SABC, or recommend that a Commission of Inquiry be appointed to conduct such a process. The findings of this inquiry must then feed into the Ministry and Department of Communications process of fundamental public policy and legal review of the SABC. SOS has long been calling for a Green Paper/White Paper process with widespread and thorough public inclusion and consultation to unambiguously resolve the status of the SABC as a truly independent public broadcaster. Further, the White Paper/ Green Paper needs to establish ideal governance structures for the SABC, establish

credible and workable public/private partnerships with the independent production industry and produce a charter and role for the SABC that will respond to public expectations and efficient service delivery.

The long term health of our public broadcaster is at stake. We urgently await your response to our proposals.

Yours sincerely

Working Group
"Save our SABC: Reclaiming our Public Broadcaster" Coalition