

MEDIA ROUNDTABLE

FOR

**THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN NATION
BUILDING**

**“A MUTUALLY REINFORCING
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PUBLIC
AND PRIVATE MEDIA AND
GOVERNMENT”**

FACILITATED BY

**ACTING JUDGE OF THE HIGH COURT
JUDGE BRYAN O'LINN**

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**POLYTECHNIC HOTEL SCHOOL
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A VOTE OF THANKS

The World Press Freedom Day Adhoc Committee would like to thank all those who attended the Media Roundtable and the cooperation and commitment they have shown in this initiative. We would like to thank specifically Honourable Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Honourable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, who has been very supportive through out the events of Freedom of Expression campaign related to the World Press Freedom Day, 2005. Since this is just a first step of the many steps we will walk in the future, we believe you will continue to support us in this important mission aimed at improving professionalism and accountability in the field of journalism.

Our thanks go to Dr. Claudia Harvey, Director, UNESCO's Windhoek Cluster who has always been there whenever we call on her for moral support.

Without our sponsors, UNESCO, UNIC and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), our goal would be still born. The success of this initiative lie in our collective efforts and cooperation that exist among all stakeholders involved.

Our thanks also go to Honourable, Bryan O'Linn, Acting Judge of the Supreme Court and Mr. Silas Keshi Shakumu, Shikongo Law Firm for the diligent work as facilitators of this important forum. We are also thankful to the speakers, Protasius Ndauedapo, CEO, New Era, Robin Tyson, MISA Namibia Chairperson, Eberhard Hofmann, Namibia Editors' Forum, and Natasha Tibinyane, KCR , who have added value to the media/ press freedom debate in Namibia.

The WPFAD Adhoc Committee/MISA Namibia would like to recognise the presence of UNAM Head of Communication and Information Department, Professor Kingo Mchombu, Head of Media and Technology of the Polytechnic of Namibia, Ms. Emily Brown, Director of MISA Regional, Mr. Luckson Chipare and Ms. Rianne Selle, Communication and Information (CI) Commissioner, Namibia national Commission for UNESCO, Ms Wilma Deetlefs, Deputy Director, Media Liaison, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Mr. Mvula ya Nangolo Special Adviser to the Minister of Information and Broadcasting.

Dr. Tjama Tjivikua, Rector of the Polytechnic of Namibia was there to give a warm welcome and support to our guests and to the media practitioners team. Thank you for giving us moral support in our journey to make access to information and press freedom a reality in our country.

We are grateful to anyone whose involvement has contributed to the positive outcome of the Media Roundtable in any way possible.

Executive summary

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC), in cooperation with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting co-sponsored a Media Roundtable which was organised by a coalition of local media NGO's, the public and private media organizations to discuss matters pertinent to the media roadmap in Namibia. This was part of the ongoing activities around the World Press Freedom Day Theme – '*Media and Good Governance – a mutually reinforcing relationship*'.

The round table took place on 13 July 2005 at the Polytechnic Hotel School.

IMPORTANT

- *It is important for readers to peruse the annexes for full speeches and statements which might be useful in catching the whole picture of Press Freedom in Namibia as presented by speakers at this platform.*

1. Background

The importance of the media in promoting good governance cannot be over-emphasized. Good governance cannot exist without the reinforcement from the media, the public and the government. Good governance can only exist in an environment where a free and vibrant press/media exist.

It is only in this mutually reinforcing environment that the press and media can deliver comprehensive and in-depth information that influences people's lives. As a result of access to information, people are able to actively participate in the decision-making processes that help to improve their livelihood. Thus, citizens' access to information could contribute to their economic, political, social and cultural development and progress.

Therefore in a democratic environment, it is important that a truly free and responsible press is functioning. This, on the other hand, highlights the need for the establishment of an independent regulatory mechanism in order to protect journalists from undue interference, to instil professionalism and to ensure fairness and accuracy in reporting of issues in the society.

However, if a free press has to act responsibly, it is critical that the media have a clear understanding of its role in a democracy and the importance of interacting and cooperating with other stakeholders. In order to embark on a journey that creates good governance, stakeholders need to interact and dialogue the way forward on access to dissemination and consumption of information.

Although the freedom of expression and that of the press is granted in the constitution, there has been a lack of positive relationships and trust between the government and the private media and between the private and the public media as the former Minister of Information and Broadcasting had remarked on the question of deregulation of the state

owned broadcaster that things could be worked on “but after trust has been established among all parties involved”, (UNESCO Windhoek Cluster Annual Report, 2004)

To kick-start the journey towards normalising relations among these important stakeholders, a Media Roundtable was organized with the aim to bring together editors and managers from the Namibian public and private media, local media NGOs and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) to discuss matters pertinent to the media environment in Namibia.

The Media Roundtable brought together the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting; the *Namibia Broadcasting Corporation (NBC)*; *The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA)* (*Regional and the Namibian Chapter*; *NEW ERA*, *Southern Times*, *Media and communications Departments of the University of Namibia and the Polytechnic of Namibia*, *Echoes of the Polytechnic of Namibia*, *University of Namibia (UNAM) Campus Visions*, *informanté*, *Allgemeine Zeitung*, *the Namibian Press Agency (Nampa)*; *Katutura Community Radio*, *the Namibia Community Radio Network (NCRN)* and all other relevant stakeholders to discuss issues of concern such as the role of the Media in Nation Building – a mutually reinforcing effort between private and public media and the government, responsible and professional reporting, access to information, the establishment of an independent regulatory body, ethics and relations among the media fraternity and other stakeholders. However the following media houses could not attend even-though they were invited:

- The Namibian
- Republikein,
- Windhoek Observer
- Namibia Today
- Namibia Economist
- Insight Namibia Magazine

2. Overall Objectives

The main objectives of the roundtable are:

1. To explore the role of the media in a democratic Namibia and in nation building, development and reconstruction;
2. To discuss and agree on subsequent forums to discuss the following:
 - a. Investigating the viability of revamping the Namibia Media Council;
 - b. To discuss and agree on issues of Code of Ethics and a Media Ombudsman and other mechanisms that may contribute to professionalism in the media;
 - c. To exchange views and ideas on how to improve relations between the private, public media, MISA and government
 - d. Access to information

3. Desired Outcomes

- To foster dialogue among all stakeholders and the media
- To foster such relationships that there is objective, fair and balanced reporting of issues of nation building thus contributing to the promotion of democratic principles in the country.
- To agree on the way forward with respect to the Media Ombudsman, Media Council, Code of Ethics, and other mechanisms that will contribute to professionalism in the media
- To issue a joint communiqué documenting the agreement

4. Participants

- The Minister of Information and Broadcasting
- Representatives of the Private Media
- Representatives of the Public Media
- Representatives of MISA

5. Activities

A half-day round table, moderated by an independent professional

THE MEETING

Media Roundtable Theme:

“The role of the media in Nation Building a mutually reinforcing relationship between the public and private media and government”

Facilitators

Facilitated by Acting Judge of the Supreme Court, Honourable Bryn O’Linn assisted by Mr. Silas Keshi Shakumu of Shikongo Law chambers, the Media Roundtable was well attended by high level media practitioners – editors, Chief Executive officers, Heads of media and communications from both the University of Namibia and Polytechnic, the Director and Acting Director of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA - Regional and MISA Namibia) respectively.

Participants were very enthusiastic and hopeful of a positive outcome.

Remark(s) by Acting Judge Bryan O’Linn

From the start the facilitator advised participants to be as constructive as possible in dealing with “these somewhat controversial issues, so Namibia can move forward”.

Opening of the event

A warm welcome was extended to the guests and participants by the host, Dr. Tjama Tjivikua, Rector of the Polytechnic of Namibia.

“THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN NATION BUILDING – A MUTUALLY REINFORCING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE MEDIA AND GOVERNMENT”

The Media Roundtable was ushered by the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Honourable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah who delivered a keynote address on the topic: “The role of the media in nation building – a mutually reinforcing relationship between public and private media and government”

In her address Nandi-Ndaitwah began: “The organisation of this Media Roundtable comes at a very opportune time. Not too long ago President Hifikepunye Pohamba took over the reigns from the Founding President Dr. Sam Nujoma and, while staying true to the principles of the ruling party and his predecessor, the President already demonstrated his resolve to promote the general wellbeing of the nation, especially the lives of our people in the most remote parts of our country. I am, therefore, delighted to be with you today in the hope that this event will lay the foundation for the Government, as the First Estate, and the media as the Forth Estate, to reinforce our relationship and carry forward the resolve of our Government to improve the living conditions of all Namibians.”

“It is acceptable that the free flow of information is a powerful tool in enhancing knowledge and democracy. Information is the strong foundation on which democracy is built. Information, if well managed has the ability to empower and motivate people to take charge of their own destinies and to contribute to self-development, as well as national development in order to eradicate poverty and other evils from the face of our country.”

“The Namibian Government would like to see our media become the instruments of change in our society. The media should inform, bridge gaps and establish dialogue in the best interest of our people. A free objective and vibrant media can contribute to intelligent and informed participation in development efforts.”

“World wide, Governments are to a great extent the generators of information, while the media serve as the tools to take this information to the people, helping them to digest it through opinion pieces or editorials and to bring their views back to the policymakers by way of letters or talk shows programmes.”

“The symbiotic relationship between Governments and the media make them partners in development, while, at the same time, it does not dictate that the media should forsake their very important role of being the watchdogs of society.”

“I cannot deny the fact that, at times there may be tension between the government and the media in a democratic society that is healthy as long as that tension is not aimed to divide the nation. I am convinced that dialogue and consultations will create mutual understanding for our different roles in society. I also hope that today’s forum will not be the last of its kind, but that it will be the start of ongoing consultations about how the government will continue interacting with the media on one hand, and how media practitioners can address certain issues of national development on the other hand. I want to echo the sentiment expressed by Joseph Joubert in the early nineteenth century that “It is better to debate a question without settling it than to settle a question without debating it”.”

“The objective of this gathering today I am informed is to consider each other’s points of view, and, in the process, develop an appreciation for our divergent views. A good start for us would be to have an open mind; open particularly to the opinions of those with whom we disagree. This is particularly important in a democratic society, such as ours where people enter into debate and discussion not to undermine one another, but to arrive at the best way to achieve the common good.”

“In the world of information society and the emerging of internet and other means of communication and information sharing, the media has to reshape its operations in order to remain relevant to their work..”

“People may adopt an attitude, that, if I can get information from the internet on any subject of my choice at any time, why should I bother to listen to the radio, T.V or read a newspaper. Hence a need for the media to be focused and to be of true servers to the people”

“I have been asked to address the topic: *“The Role of the Media in Nation Building – a mutually reinforcing relationship between private and public media and the*

government.” This topic is very appropriate, since the Government views the media as partner with the tools to carry its nation building and development messages to the people. At the same time, the media also serve as a mouthpiece to the population to bring their needs and aspirations to the attention of the government through the letter pages in newspapers or discussion programmes on radio and television. ”

“The media thus have an important role to play as a partner in nation-building and promoting our young democracy. The Government expects the media to emphasize both the good and the bad in our society, because the media is the mirror of society. People follow what is happening in the country and the world through newspapers, radio and TV. This demonstrates the heavy responsibility of media practitioners, because they mould the opinion of the population, and in doing so, they mould the nation. ”

“Information and education are the bedrock of democracy and it is in particular in the area of information dissemination that the media have a central role to play. Informing people to become better participants in democracy cannot and must not be seen only as the responsibility of government. It is the responsibility of all of us, and even more so of the media. The Government wants the media to educate the people by publishing reports and analysis on topics ranging from the economy to the stock market, from education to the environment health to agriculture. You must cover the whole spectrum. ”

“The media in Namibia are in the very fortunate position, because our Constitution creates a very conducive environment for you to perform your duties of informing, educating and entertaining the nation. The right to freedom of speech and expression, which include freedom of the press and other media is entrenched in our supreme law and nobody can take that away from you. The media are thus not subjected to guesswork on the rights they have. ”

“However, like other freedoms, this freedom is not unbridled and may be exercised only as long as it does not impinge on the freedom of others. Media practitioners must always keep in mind that the same Constitution that grants them freedoms, also stipulates that the dignity of all persons shall be inviolable, that no person shall be subject to interference with the privacy of their homes, correspondence or communication. Other restrictions on freedoms are contained in Article 21 (2) of the Constitution, which addresses the sovereignty and integrity of the country, national security, public order, decency and morality, defamation or incitement to an offence. This means, in access their constitutional rights, media practitioners has a responsibility to defend and protect the Namibian Constitution as part of their nation building. ”

“Moulding the opinion of the nation is an enormous responsibility and it should be done with professionalism, integrity and honesty. This is where media ethics come in. Media ethics has many facets and because of its abstract nature, it is not always easy for everyone to agree on these issues. In fact, the news maker, the news reporter and the news consumer each has its own opinion on media ethics. The application of media ethics, therefore, requires a balancing act, a judgement, and a constant interaction with your conscience. ”

“I am aware the media practitioners in Namibia to date differ on a uniform Code of Ethics, and this is disturbing. The SADC Protocol on Culture, Information and Sport, as well as the Information Policy for the Republic of Namibia call on media practitioners to adopt a Code of Ethics to boost public confidence and professionalism in the media sector. The Government does not want to impose such a code on media practitioners, but will continue advocating for and encouraging our media to develop and adopt a Code of Ethics. This is common practice in many professions and I don't understand why the Namibian media cannot agree on this.”

“With regard to responsibility, you need to remember that the primary purpose of your profession is to inform the people so that they may make judgements on the issues of their time. To quote the American Society of Newspaper Editors: “Newspapermen and women who abuse this power of their professional role for selfish motives or unworthy purposes are faithless to that public trust”.”

“Responsibility in journalism requires that you don't subscribe to the notion of publish and be damned, but that you report news and information in a manner that will allow the public to judge.”

“Accuracy and objectivity go hand in hand with responsibility and to achieve accuracy and objectivity the media must be willing to find, verify, check and recheck facts to exclude bias and distortions creeping into reporting. Accuracy and objectivity, as is the case with responsibility, equally”

“An issue of concern is the perception of the media that government is not open to scrutiny. The old adage goes that the pen is mightier than the sword and this shows that media practitioners hold an enormous influence. Therefore, it is important that, media must also be subject to scrutiny, just as the conduct of official power is subject to scrutiny. The freedom of the media is not under threat if the Government speaks out on media abuses. By the Constitutional provision the media and each citizens is guaranteed freedom of speech and expression, so are these rights applicable to the Government or any other entity for that matter. Therefore the government cannot look on when the nation is misinformed through the media.” *(Please find speech attached...)*

The Minister went on to say that it was high time that the media put its house in order by setting up a credible and independent body that would ensure accountability and responsibility on the part of Journalist, although the government would not force one on to hem.

UNESCO'S MESSAGE WAS BASED ON THE ROLE OF UNESCO PLAYS IN MEDIA FREEDOM

Dr. Claudia Harvey noted that UNESCO Communication and Information Sector fosters the building of “*Knowledge Societies*” and promotes the use of new technologies or ICTs in education, culture and science.

“One of UNESCO's fundamental tasks is that of promoting the *free flow of ideas and universal access to information and to contribute to the strengthening of communication and information capacities so as to empower communities and citizens and to enable them to participate effectively in the democratic process (UNESCO's programme and*

Budget, 2002 - 2003 pg. 151 para. 2). One of UNESCO's fundamental aims is to use communication and information to promote freedom of expression, universal access to information, respect for cultural diversity and equal access to quality education."

"UNESCO's role in media freedom is as old as the organization itself. Sixty years ago, the State Parties to the constitution of UNESCO, agreed and demonstrated their determination to "develop and to increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding" (UNESCO Texts, page 7). The intensive campaign for freedom of expression and press freedom on the continent was reinforced in the early 1990s to bring to the world's attention the importance of human rights of all humankind. Freedom of expression is a fundamental right of all world citizens that encourages confidence and invokes courage to press forward their demands for basic human rights such as freedom to education, freedom to practice and celebrate their cultures in diversity, freedom to apply and bring into the open their innovative ideas and the right to food and health services."

"We are faced with a number of challenges associated with the emergence of an information society and the threat of a widening digital divide. In building "Information and Knowledge Societies, people need to be empowered through sharing of information. Multifaceted channels would have to be employed in the collection and distribution of information. We are witnesses to the world of technology that makes information delivery faster. The internet, computers, telephones, newspapers and television have enabled different people to reach out to each other. Sharing information through these means, the world is going through a process of building "Information and Knowledge Societies" in which people value their cultural diversity and encourage the increased and enriching relationships. The concept is based on an empowering social vision that encompasses plurality, inclusion, solidarity and participation. However, most of these media, and therefore most access is limited to the development world."

"If emphasis is placed on the value of participation, then strategies must be put in place for the participation of ALL. This is why UNESCO places value on the development of community media and on infrastructural and human capacity building through its Governmental Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC)."

"Such community media include community radios and community multi-media centres that give people, especially those at the grassroots, the opportunity to participate in development activities. These initiatives allow people the opportunity to learn new innovations, exchange ideas and experiences from within and from without. This makes the use of technologies in the delivery and exchange of information aimed at capacity building an urgent action. These mechanisms are aimed at providing equitable access to knowledge and closing the information gap between the rich and the poor in our societies. The idea manifests itself in the concept of taking information and knowledge right to people's door steps."

"UNESCO emphasizes independence and pluralistic press and the media because as channels of communication and information they facilitate interaction through dialogue among people from different cultural backgrounds."

"UNESCO is also promoting media independence in conflict areas where people are in greater need of information that enables them to survive and to play active roles in

conflict resolution and allow smoother transition towards a culture of peace. Freedom of the press, pluralism and independence of the media, development of community newspapers and radio stations are crucial to the re-establishment of social bonds and to the reconciliation process.”

“UNESCO also defends the rights of journalists. In some situations, UNESCO joins the world wide advocacy to prevent the harassment and persecution.”

“UNESCO believes that governments can forge a mutual and reciprocal partnership with the media in order to promote a culture of peace and development through dialogue and commitment . One realizes that there is a need for access to information and the need for accurate and objective reporting. Member States of UNESCO and the United Nations Information Centre recognize that media and government have a duty to provide information to citizens. The media remain powerful tools in creating awareness among the public, of government policies and of the international and local social and economic situations.”

“Another role that UNESCO plays in media freedom is the provision of advisory services on media legislation and sensitization of governments and parliamentarians and other decision makers on the need for enacting new media and information laws or repealing the old and outdated ones. In cooperation with our partners, UNESCO is ready to respond to requests from governments and national authorities by providing expert missions and technical logistical assistance or through the organization of meetings and other events, like this one, dealing with issues of critical concern to the media environment.” *(Please find speech attached...)*

CONTRIBUTION PAPERS

THE PRIVATE MEDIA – PITFALLS OR CHALLENGES?

Eberhard Hofmann – Chairperson, Namibia Editors' Forum spoke on behalf of Editors by addressing the *“Pitfalls and problems of the private media”*. *Before he began to address his topic, he remarked: “Let us rather talk of challenges than of pitfalls and problems”*.

Who are the private media?

The print media: Three daily newspapers published in three languages – and if you look inside you discover more languages, overlapping in the advertising columns, sometimes on the readers' letter page. Furthermore one coastal biweekly paper and four weekly papers, including a political party organ.

The electronic media, next to our public broadcaster: Various community and commercial radio programs.

What about the purely advertising media distributed to your garden gate or dropped in your post box?

What about community journals, confessional and church papers as well as in-house journals that venture far into the public domain?

Not to be excluded is the volatile domain of the Internet which is still expanding but also destroying much of our time when we have to sift junk and spam products from what we really need.

Purely donor driven media have quickly been sorted out after the political heat of the transitional period after independence, 1990. The private media you see now are not only those that have survived but which have thrived despite of numerous odds and tribulations, some in-house, some external.

With the exception of a rather curious government advertising ban on the private daily in the official language – which is still being upheld – the media climate has been free and fair and without state interference since independence. We may not ignore it since “an injury to one is an injury to all”. Government should come on record to the private media what exactly may lead to such punitive measure. Government advertising is after all done with public funds.

Back to daily routine – Private newspapers are taxed which means that information and opinion in print are taxed. Furthermore by paying tax the private media add to the subsidy and contribute to the upkeep of state media which on their part also compete for their share of the limited advertising cake available in Namibia.

A pitfall and drawback daily overcome by the private media are the long distances to their valued readers, often found in low density areas. The distance covered for the

distribution of the daily papers from the early morning hours to the return to the Windhoek home base adds up to close to 16000 km per day.

In the chain from the news room to the reader a paper is as strong as the weakest link, which may snap if the delivery van hits a kudu at Omatako.

Yet, for the balance and strengthening of society the private media remain indispensable as partners in democracy.

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN NATION BUILDING

Both public and private media personnel had a chance to present papers on how they saw the media's role or contribution towards nation building in Namibia. Mr. Protasius Ndauendapo presented a paper on behalf of the public media on the topic: "*The role of the state (public) media in nation building: The case of Namibia*".

He noted that "the state-owned media institutions in Namibia play a greater role in the process of nation building as they are contributing towards national reconciliation, economic development, fostering a culture of democracy, tolerance for diverse views and the narrowing of the rural-urban divide, more so what the private-owned media are able and prepared to do."

"Therefore, the roles of the state-owned and private-owned media institutions in our country should be complimentary of each other as both are supposed to serve the interests of their readers, listeners and viewers."

"This call for better co-operation between the state-owned and private-owned media institution in Namibia in matters of common interests so as to promote better service delivery, professional and ethical conduct, efficiency and better return on investments, in line with best corporate and business practices."

"I have no doubt that if the afore-mentioned details can be realised, then both the state-owned and private-owned media institutions would better serve the people of Namibia as they continue to accelerate the process of nation building." (*Please find speech attached...*)

COMMUNITY RADIO

Nowadays community media has become important and influential in our communities especially in communities in the periphery of cities, towns and rural areas. These channels of communication and information that are suppose to be developed and reach out to the majority of people, they are faced with enormous challenges

Speaking on the topic: "*The state and status of community media in Namibia*", Natasha Tibinyane, Station Manager of Katutura Community Radio (KCR) enumerated these challenges for stakeholders to brainstorm on them and ultimately find a solution to these new tools of communication and information.

Challenges:

“What I’ve just described is the ideal we are striving for in Namibia but has been achieved in countries less developed than us such as Mali and Mozambique.”

“Compared to other Southern African countries, community radio is a relatively new concept in Namibia. The first such initiative was KCR in 1993. We have six community radio stations of which all of them are located in urban areas. There are currently five community radio initiatives: Ocean Wave (Swakop), Omaheke Community Radio (Gobabis) and more in Oshakati, Keetmanshoop and Otjiwarongo.”

“Most of the above initiatives are community initiated and we all are members of the NCRN, which was a project of MISA-Namibia until August 2004 when it was divested. It now is an autonomous body with its own board of directors consisting of members from community radio stations and initiatives.

Rehoboth has two community newspapers, Die Akasia and Die Spioen. Unfortunately The Caprivi Vision in Katima Mulilo and another community newspaper in Keetmanshoop are off the streets due to the main challenge all community media are facing – the lack of funding.”

“Community media around the world is largely funded by donor agencies. The problem with this scenario is that their funding interests change as their political interest change and it is short term. This is why the emphasis should be put on government or the state being the main partner in the establishment and strengthening of community media.”

“For example, the South African government established the MDDA Fund through which government provides resources for community radio stations and initiatives to receive equipment, training and infrastructure.”

“The NCRN in the Draft Communications Bill suggested that a Universal Access Fund be established where a percentage of the license fees paid by commercial radio stations be made available for community radio stations and initiatives.

This provides initiatives the opportunity to be able to at least have the basics and gives them the tools to become sustainable and not have to rely on anyone for funding after at least two years.”

“The reason why we have so many initiatives is because they lack equipment, which is all one needs to apply for a license at the NCC. Most initiatives have been struggling for years to acquire the equipment because it is very expensive. Maybe I should have also mentioned at the outset that the maintenance of radio is VERY EXPENSIVE.”

“Another challenge we are facing is that for training we again rely on funding from donors, which again has to fit within their socio-political scope, and after we train our mostly unemployed volunteers and give them the skills that make them attractive to commercial stations – we lose them. Now we at KCR do not have a problem with that because we also see ourselves as a training ground for future public and commercial broadcasters and have a huge pool to choose from. But the same cannot be said for community radio stations in other parts of the country where the pool is not as big. If government supports us in the continuous training of people we would always have the extras to fall back on.”

“In developing countries and in particular Southern Africa, community media or community radio is increasingly becoming the preferred medium. Countries such as Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia have proved that people do not only want to listen to the latest music hits but also want to be educated, informed and lastly entertained. KCR, although off-air for a number of years, is slowly but surely becoming the preferred radio station among those living in Katutura and Khomasdal again. Our reality is that due to the lack of funding our progress is much slower than what it would have been if we had the support we needed.”

“As far as I know government has never directly supported the development of community media considering the important role it can play in bringing about positive change in society and nation building. Hopefully this roundtable will bring about a change in the attitude of not only government but THANK YOU all stakeholders in nation building towards community media.” *(Please find speech attached...)*

MISA NAMIBIA’S ROLE IN NATION BUILDING

At a gathering of this nature would not complete without addressing the role of MISA in nation building since it is an organization that is “promoting media diversity, pluralism, self-sufficiency and independence” in Southern Africa especially the MISA Namibia Chapter.

Robin Tyson MISA Namibia’s Chairperson of the Governing Council, addressed the question saying that the media are essential for the continued development and broadening of democratic values in the country.

“Only last week, the G8 meeting in Scotland confirmed the transfer to Africa of billions of Euros, but stressed again that it was important that African countries themselves commit themselves to ensuring that this money was spent in a responsible manner, with high levels of accountability and a lack of corrupt practices.”

“The functions of the media in a democratic society, according to Graham Murdock, are to give a truthful, comprehensive and insightful account of events, to provide a forum for the exchange of comments and criticisms, project a representative pictures of the various groups in a society, to present the goals and values of society and to provide full access to information and knowledge, for citizens to make sense of their situation.”

“MISA stands by those functions in order to further support and encourage the democratic exchange of views in the country.”

“In the Namibian context, we recognize and appreciate the efforts of the government since independence to open up and liberalize the airwaves. The broadcasting sector has gone from one broadcaster – the SWABC, to a myriad of commercial and community radio and television stations.”

“Even these commercial media organizations, however, need to realize their duty to society, and their own role in nation building. While we do recognize the essentially ‘hands off’ attitude of the present regulator, there are certain worrying signs that need to be addressed.”

“Radio stations that continue to renege on their duty of carrying Namibian (not South African, British or American) news, stations that continue to fail in their duty to promote local Namibian musicians, and stations that, while making handsome profits, fail to plough back that into the development of media training institutions and further the qualifications of producers and presenters.”

“During a recent visit to Johannesburg, I was interested to discover that commercial radio stations have stringent license conditions. This includes their requirement to have relevant local news content, a demand with some stations (I spoke to Kaya FM) to have a 60% speech content and 40% music content, and a requirement, by legislation, to train staff. Kaya FM are compelled to spend R200 000 a year on training their staff. We cannot accept commercial print and electronic media continuing to reap profits from Namibian readers, listeners and viewers, without putting something back into the community in return.”

“We remain committed to the media environment in Namibia – committed to enhancing it, developing it, expanding it and ensuring that the media act at all times in the best interests of society as a whole.”

“In order to further this end several initiatives have been undertaken by our association, including the drafting of the Code of Ethics for Namibian journalists. We believe that it is vital that the media work from a professional base, and we encourage self-regulation of this important sector. It is unfortunate that, to date, this Code of Ethics remains a paper document only. Some media institutions have embraced the code, but methods of enforcement remain elusive.”

“In addition there are other media organizations that, while not specifically boycotting the code, or raising any objections to it, are just perhaps not that interested. Some believe that the public, the readers, listeners and viewers, are the only ‘body’ that the media are accountable to. We, on the other hand, believe that the Code of Ethics can go a long way to ensuring that the public, as well as other involved parties such as the government and private sector, are given some element of protection from irresponsible and inaccurate reporting. To this end we again encourage all media – government, public broadcaster, commercial and community radio stations and publications, to join us in attempting to further promote media professionalism and accountability.”

“However, this should not be taken to mean that such a Code will protect anybody from fair comment and criticism. Encouraging lively debate on issues of national issues remains an important tenant of any democracy. In addition, there can be an argument that it is those in positions of power and authority that, above all, need to be criticized. The media have an important role, especially in this country, of ensuring that government and parastatals are scrutinized and kept to their own promises.”

“MISA Namibia are pleased to have worked on the drafting of several important pieces of media legislation, including the new Communications Act and Access to Information Act.”

“MISA also strives to make itself available at numerous forums in order to give the media point of view on various important national issues. This includes the recent Media Barometer, the Community Radio Round Table, World Press Freedom Day

celebrations and, earlier this year we were honoured to be invited to the National Assembly in order to address new parliamentarians on how the media can be more involved in communicating matters of national policy.”

“We are proud to remain, through our wide and experienced membership, a source of knowledge and expertise in the field of media and will continue to offer our input in matters of national interest as far as the media are concerned. We believe that, with this further sharing of ideas, we can continue to enhance the media landscape in the country and, through this, further the aims and objectives of our founding fathers, who envisaged, through the Constitution, a Namibia with a bright, hopeful future.” ***(Please find speech attached...)***

ROUNDTABLE INPUTS FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

This part of the roundtable was the climax of the meeting because it was here that participation thrived in discussions, questions and debate. Comments were made and questions were asked and some answers to clarify points on the media terrain in Namibia were found. For the sake of people who were not part of the meeting and those who could not be present, the script will be as raw as it was from the "horse's mouth". This will help people to judge for themselves the way discussions went. The aim is to introduce readers to the meeting room where journalists deliberated on issues close to their hearts. Readers also would notice the direct language of passion for change and desperate voices for solidarity in building unity and professionalism.

Discussions dealt mostly with the Code of Conduct/Ethics and the need for the establishment of a Journalists media council or Ombudsman. Time could not allow the discussions on other issues such as the relationships between the public and private media, MISA and government. It was decided that these issues would be discussed at other forums to be held in the future.

Code of conduct/Ethics

The question was put on the floor by the facilitator: "should there be a code of ethics and if so, for instance, I see here an existing code of ethics and maybe we should discuss [it] if you are aware about it, whether this existing one can be used as a guideline or as something to be amended?"

Comments

The Code of Ethics is important due to lack of a conduct within most media institutions, the current code of ethics adheres to the best practices of journalism globally.

There is need for broader consultation to ensure that all media houses are involved and have a buy in.

There is need for dialogue with all stakeholders.

Recommendation

Play around with this one and make some changes here and there or we come up with something new altogether, but we do need a [new] code of conduct.

Comments

1. Should the code of ethics have some legislative authority behind it or not – should it be recognised by the state? Taking into consideration the common law and the Namibian constitution which spells out basic principles but such a code may assist a court to also take into consideration what is contained in a code of conduct when there are

disputes between parties. You suggest obviously that it must be a written code and that it must have some legislative backing.

2. The Namibian Editors Forum is a member of the Southern African Editor's Forum, which is a body on the SADC level. The council of the Southern African Editors Forum has assigned a task to the Namibian Editors' forum to look into the issue of ethics.
 - a) The Namibian Editors Forum has approached the assistance of MISA to submit an overview at the council level of the SADC Forum on which codes are available and to work towards a common code of the SADC region.
 - b) There is need to create our own code of ethics which obviously operate within the Namibian constitution. If we take this forward and obviously it'll become a document and those that may not subscribe will still have to answer within the Namibian Constitution and work in the frame of reference within the Namibian law.
 - c) The government is the signatory to the SADC protocol and it in the new draft revised information policy the government has made it very clear that in no way will it impose such a code on the media fraternity in the country. That it must come from the media and they must see to that it is implemented.
 - d) There is a need for a professional code of ethics, and if it is a professional code of ethics its not legislation issue.
 - e) The crucial issue though is how are we going to implement, to regulate this document. Will there be a media ombudsman which was tried and didn't work, will there be a media council that is going to adjudicate, who is going to pay these people, what will be the mechanism for implementing this process. There are certain logistical issues to be addressed.
 - f) The meeting should use the current document [and] should only be a guideline due to lack of proper consultation.
 - g) There was lack of funding for specific personnel to keep it going. [It] is a challenge. The previous media council was driven from the office of ABACUS where they would also meet and judge Mouton was at that time the chairperson of that council. But if the media cannot find some way of funding a specific office(,) we will be doing the same in the next 15 years again. T
 - h) here is a need to have a body which is funded from wherever, to be driven by the media professionals will not be possible.

Background to Namibia Code of Ethics

The meeting was brought to order and the background of the existing Code of Ethics was brought into the picture.

- a) The document was done through as much of a consultative process, bearing in mind – as it was stated earlier - people are invited and they still don't turn up. You go out and try and get them on board and they still don't come. If we are to take this process further we should remember whom this is for and work hard to improve our own situations, we need to get involved. I have to clarify something first: at the time this document was done, a copy of it was placed in every newspaper, e.g. the Namibian, the Republikein, I am just not certain about New Era - It was widely distributed. Not only to the media, but it was made known to the rest of the readers.
- b) But the problem was follow-up. But still not everyone was involved: there was the understanding of naming and shaming those that were not involved. Those that are buying into this should lead by example....
- c) At the time we had raised enough money to pay for someone to take up the responsibilities of activities and organising of the ombudspersons office. When it comes to organising the ombudsman office, I think there was enough money for that to be done for a year. We has said at that time that the media should do what is done in other countries, for example in Tanzania the media pay's a levy to be able to raise money to run the media council in Tanzania – which most of you might be aware of, is successful – it managed to get an award in 2003 for being the most successful council.
- d) For us this is a great example, and the way they have done it is similar to what they have done in South Africa where each media organisation pays a levy for the running of the press ombudsman. We should know that we cannot expect donors to fund you for these things forever. It is important therefore for those who have committed themselves to become part of the process to be ready to pay contributions. Another learning point from the South African council is that the information being provided in the newspapers on a consistent basis states that 'if you have a complaint this is the office to approach,' if you go to South Africa almost every newspaper has this information, but this is not happening in Namibia. This is essential to get the process going.
- e) It was suggested that as we can use this as a basis in terms of moving forward, in terms of making progress there's nothing wrong with using this as a stepping-stone in terms of moving forward. I also just want to draw your attention to the fact that it is already been said that we can look at the region in terms of examples of good practices.
- f) Another new development in our region is that SADC is developing a curriculum for SADC journalist and what would be really a failed mission if

Namibia fall short in terms of something such as a code of ethics. So I would just like to encourage the house to move towards accepting something such as a code of ethics.

Intervention

- a) In any proceedings of this nature or in any process where by you are intending to give birth to anything the initial process is very important (you first try and give birth to a sample document - an instrument, you work through it; the importance is that it is aimed to serve. Many people will say they were not part of the initiation process, but what's important is to make sure that at the stage where the document was adopted that the majority of the people were represented and I think this is the case in this regard and was also mentioned continuously within this roundtable. For us to sit here and say when are we going to move forward and who and who was not consulted doesn't even apply. There is no way that anybody can raise any objections or say they do not subscribe to this document, especially when it is adopted and well known by the practitioners and also adopted by the court. So it will be helpful to come up with your own instrument to say that you are the majority and have some legal backup.
- b) There is need for an enforcement mechanism otherwise people will not abide by the document, any rules or conducts, policies will serve no real purpose. We have to have a legal binding document, for the sake of guidance and also enforce this to make sure things work out right. Without a legal binding document there will be serious problems.

Recommendation

- a) For the process of progress it is not possible to involve everybody. If we have to start all over again it might not prove that this document will be different. What we could suggest is that we go and look at this document and make additions or subtractions.
- b) If journalists and media institutions are allowed to operate like loose cannons, we can certainly envisage greater problems.
- c) The participants become signatories to the agreement while the changes are commissioned to be done.
- d) As long as there is a body recognised to draft the process there is already progress. If the elected forum can decide, 'this is what we want,' then what ever is contained within must be widely publicised and made known. We are almost there; and we should not worry too much with those that are not here, the main thing is that they will be informed and will know about the process and decisions.
- e) This process has to be as much voluntarily as possible. Unfortunately the biggest media institutions in the country are not represented here (the

Republikein and The Namibian). I have a question to Robyn Tyson: 'How many signed up as corporate remembers of MISA?' Maybe if they are members we can use that as a force to move forward and can we have an indication to say that people here are indeed members of the media forum or are they simply attending meetings.

- f) The code was accepted by the majority, I was informed that it was only the Republikein, The Observer and Namibia Today – sorry to mention names – who were not part of this document and who are also not present here today. To those 3 who did not subscribe to this document, maybe we should go to them and ask them... only then can we move forward. Maybe we should assign a committee to see these 3 institutions to find out why they are not interested.
- g) What might work out more effectively is maybe if the CEOs of all these institutions can come together, sign the document and make a declaration so we can move on with the document.

Recommendation

- a) Can we - as far as that is concern at least say that this meeting (obviously you'll clarify who were present at the meeting) declare themselves in favour of the principal of the code of ethics? Secondly, that this meeting regards this code as substantially satisfactory and to be regarded for the time being as a guideline for the purpose of progress? If you are, then we can move on to the second topic. I think we might not get to the third one today, but can we decide: 'are we in favour of **A Written Code of Ethics** being implemented? Are we agreeing that it is a substantially satisfactory form of guideline? Does all of you or most of you agree?

In the beginning there was ...

- a) A media ombudsperson was chosen and a media council set up a few years ago.... What happened? Do we have a media council presently? We also have no journalist association.
This was run on a voluntarily basis at the ABACUS office - the media council with Judge Mouton as the media ombudsperson. There was no funding for any personnel no proper office structure and ABACUS also failed financially and when they closed down the media council also failed.
- b) There was funding for a kind of secretarial process to be done provided by MISA Namibia. There was a process worked out to announce the appointment of this person but nothing happened. The media advertised this information on the radio stations – that we were looking for this person - but nothing happened. The funding was not the issue; we raised enough money for a year's operation for the office. The same happened in Botswana: they have moved from MISA Botswana to a separate office. But initially funds were there for 1 year and this is what happened.

- c) Some of the concerns at the time were that: the person appointed was high profiled and what we wanted was someone that was not necessarily a media person. The PS. Mr. Mocks Shivute was very involved. Publicity was there, but the concern is that careful selection is a pre-requisite, this is a must. For this situation I suggest the strategy in terms of moving forward and carrying out the objectives are what we should look at.
- d) It must be done in such a way that the legislation can sustain this. You have laws common or principals, what do you want for this thing. Perhaps that's fairly why provisions are made in the constitution for the role of the media.
- e) When studying the whole idea of the person, such office does not have powers to act out some duties or functions, it only have powers over its members. If there are some media newspapers that does not want to be part they still remain out there. What you really need is something similar like in our case we have the law society: whether you want to practice law and do something you have to go to the law society and the same happen when you mess up or do something illegal. Maybe this is some of the things you need to consider.
- f) I think a few years back: most journalist came to the idea that for us to have a body like the media council.... I think it worked very well for a number of 2-3 year it was functioning well... later some people started questioning it (some asked 'who area you to decide on behalf of me, e.g.). At the very beginning all agreed and was excited because it served a specific interest. Both the public and the media was involved. It died because it was a loose association and when it is not binding it will be loose.
- g) The appointed ombudsman sometimes mentioned he was left in the dark when it comes to any kind of relationship of the media. He didn't complain about money just mention that he was thrown away. In any case, we must come up with a way for us to proceed. We don't have solidarity amongst us journalist and that is a problem that should be noted.
- h) Without rules no body knows how to go about it. The expense is how to get a functioning body. What we need to do is strengthen it. It is in our own interest to have something like this.
- i) We should have the media involved to constantly take information to the public. How many people really know what a media ombudsperson or even a general ombudsperson is? Not many people know these terms there must be a breakdown to explain this to the ordinary person. There must be awareness to the public to the level where they can understand.

Interjection

- a) You can't have the publicity if there is no concrete structure.

Recommendations

- a) If we want there has to be consensus about the re-establishment or the establishment of the institution of the ombudsperson and media council. Maybe that's as far as we can go today... And also set out a study group to get all this information together, to get resolutions because without it the other media people might just pull us apart.
- b) Maybe we need so-called expert or a study group to examine or investigate the sort of association needed and within an appropriate time span and appropriate venue to come up with the resolution. Do we still want this person or office, will there be a place for this forum and certain facilities and funds for these people, this needs to be discussed. It might not work to get people on voluntarily basis. Maybe we should say there should be a media council or ombudsperson. This meeting is bringing up the issue that further study needs to be done to study the process in detail, the problem in detail, and discuss it with relevant stakeholders.
- c) Maybe we should try and see if we can have information to see if there are really genuine complaints from the public. If we say that government institution regulate commercial media are we doing it because it is trendy across the world or do we really need it, like the NCC.
- d) The NCC serves a good purpose. I agree with you we shouldn't leave it to the government to regulate things. It should be an outside body: the NCC is a division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. I agree we have to do this independent from the government.
- e) Maybe what this meeting could say is that further research be done and that we should think about the idea of how the committee should be empowered. We need someone to do proper research. There is certainly a lot of information how the media is being regulated!
- f) Let us note that the meeting felt that a further study should be made on how these bodies should function or how it will be financed. At the same time I'll suggest the way forward. We've already said something on the code of ethics... further study and negotiations with relevant parties should be undertaken as soon as possible...
- g) You may need some expert people, especially those who have been involved previously. You can consider all that – it is up to you. How many people should be in this committee? Maybe we should regard this selection process as the last phase for the day. I proposed about 5 people because you will not come easily to resolutions and concrete ideas if you are many.
- h) A very important issue to ensure proper function of the committee, resources are something we need to look at.

- i) Maybe the committee should remain after this roundtable and come up with a press release... so those who are not here may know what was decided and discussed.
- j) I suggest that Mr. Hofmann of the editors committee should be part of this process to assist us with the writing of this press release.
- k) I have a bit of a problem with the wording of the 2nd resolution and I think we should word it differently.

Appreciation

Participants thanked the sponsors and the organizers of the Media Roundtable, adding that other forums like it should be convened in the future to assist Namibian journalists and other media practitioners in capacity building towards rebuilding independent and functional professional institutions.

UNESCO and MISA were called upon to assist in building relations among media stakeholders, following the credible view given to the current Media Roundtable.

Final media Communiqué

One of the purposes of the roundtable was to come up with a joint statement detailing what the parties at the meeting have agreed on. The communiqué is below:

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

ADHOC COMMITTEE

PO BOX 97457, MAERUA MALL, TELEPHONE: 061 236 069 FAX: 061 236 054

Media ROUNDTABLE

“The role of the media in Nation Building a mutually reinforcing relationship between the public and private media and government”

**Polytechnic Hotel
WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA**

13 July 2005

Final Media Communiqué

The Media Roundtable sponsored by MIB, UNESCO and UNIC for media practitioners and media organizations was held on the 13 July 2005 at the Polytechnic Hotel School in Windhoek, Namibia. At the conclusion of the forum the participants recommended that the World Press Freedom Day Adhoc Committee formulate the following statement, to which representatives of the media organizations represented associated themselves:

It was agreed:

That in line with the Namibian Constitution, the Information Policy, the Windhoek Declaration, and the SADC Protocol on Information Sports and Culture, the representatives share the same vision, beliefs and aspirations with regard to upholding the said documents and principles. The documents call on media practitioners to adopt a code of ethics to boost public confidence and professionalism in the media sector.

Noting the presence and the participation of various media houses and organizations and the importance of collaboration among such.

Reaffirming the importance of the promoting media diversity, pluralism, self sufficiency and independence.

That the participants declared themselves in favour of a principle of a code of Ethics and that the existing code of ethics provides guidance until a final binding document is developed.

Thus the committee was to commission a comprehensive and all inclusive study on the code of ethics for Namibian Media.

Thus the meeting agreed that there currently being no functioning media ombudsman or media council

Consensus was reached that the reestablishment of the Media Mediator or Media Council be implemented.

That such institution is central to an independent, impartial and accountable media profession.

The Participants:

Expressed concern at the lack of commitment, on the part of media practitioners, to establish and formulate professional mechanisms to which media will be accountable

The Participants resolved:

To encourage Namibian media houses in facilitating the development of a Namibian Media Code of Ethics/Conduct to ensure media independence and accountability.

To encourage that individual media organization to sign the agreed upon Code of Ethics/Conduct and to subscribe to establishing a Media Mediator or Media Council

ANNEXES

Annex 3.2

STATEMENT BY
THE HON. NETUMBU NANDI- NDAITWAH,
MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING,
AT THE MEDIA ROUND TABLE,
POLYTECHNIC HOTEL,
WINDHOEK,
WEDNESDAY, 13 JULY 2005

Director of Ceremonies, Honorable Acting Justice Bryan O'Linn,
Mr. Matthew Haikali, Acting Director of MISA Namibia,
Members of the Ad Hoc Committee on World Press Freedom Day,
Media Editors and Managers,

The organization of this Media Roundtable comes at a very opportune time. Not too long ago President Hifikepunye Pohamba took over the reigns from the Founding President Dr. Sam Nujoma and, while staying true to the principles of the ruling party and his predecessor, the President already demonstrated his resolve to promote the general wellbeing of the nation, especially the lives of our people in the most remote parts of our country. I am, therefore, delighted to be with you today in the hope that this event will lay the foundation for the Government, as the First Estate, and the media as the Forth Estate, to reinforce our relationship and carry forward the resolve of our Government to improve the living conditions of all Namibians.

It is acceptable that the free flow of information is a powerful tool in enhancing knowledge and democracy. Information is the strong foundation on which democracy is built. Information, if well managed has the ability to empower and motivate people to take charge of their own destinies and to contribute to self-development, as well as national development in order to eradicate poverty and other evils from the face of our country.

The Namibian Government would like to see our media become the instruments of change in our society. The media should inform, bridge gaps and establish dialogue in the best interest of our people. A free objective and vibrant media can contribute to intelligent and informed participation in development efforts.

World wide, Governments are to a great extent the generators of information, while the media serve as the tools to take this information to the people, helping them to digest it through opinion pieces or editorials and to bring their views back to the policymakers by way of letters or talk shows programmes.

The symbiotic relationship between Governments and the media make them partners in development, while, at the same time, it does not dictate that the media should forsake their very important role of being the watchdogs of society.

I cannot deny the fact that, at times there may be tension between the government and the media in a democratic society, that is health as long as that tension is not aimed to divide the nation. I am convinced that dialogue and consultations will create mutual understanding for our different roles in society. I also hope that today's forum will not be the last of its kind, but that it will be the start of ongoing consultations about how the government will continue interacting with the media on one hand, and how media practitioners can address certain issues of national development on the other hand. I want to echo the sentiment expressed by Joseph Joubert in the early nineteenth century that "It is better to debate a question without settling it than to settle a question without debating it."

The objective of this gathering today I am informed is to consider each other's points of view, and, in the process, develop an appreciation for our divergent views. A good start for us would be to have an open mind; open particularly to the opinions of those with whom we disagree. This is particularly important in a democratic society, such as ours where people enter into debate and discussion not to undermine one another, but to arrive at the best way to achieve the common good.

In the world of information society and the emerging of internet and other means of communication and information sharing, the media has to reshape its operations in order to remain relevant to their work.

People may adopt an attitude, that, if I can get information from the internet on any subject of my choice at any time, why should I bother to listen to the radio, T.V or read newspaper. Hence a need for the media to be focused and to be a true servers to the people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have been asked to address the topic of "*The Role of the Media in Nation Building – a mutually reinforcing relationship between private and public media and the government.*" This topic is very appropriate, since the Government views the media as partner with the tools to carry its nation building and development messages to the people. At the same time, the media also serve as a mouthpiece to the population to bring their needs and aspirations to the attention of the government through the letter pages in newspapers or discussion programmes on radio and television.

The media thus have an important role to play as a partner in nation-building and promoting our young democracy. The Government expects the media to emphasize both the good and the bad in our society, because the media is the mirror of society. People follow what is happening in the country and the world through newspapers, radio and TV. This demonstrates the heavy responsibility of media practitioners, because they mould the opinion of the populations, and in doing so, they mould the nation.

Information and education are the bedrock of democracy and it is in particular in the area of information dissemination that the media have a central role to play. Informing people to become better participants in democracy cannot and must not be seen only as the responsibility of government. It is the responsibility of all of us, and even more so of the media. The Government wants the media to educate the people by publishing reports and analysis on topics ranging from the economy to the stock market, from education to the environment health to agriculture. You must cover the whole spectrum.

The media in Namibia are in the very fortunate position, because our Constitution creates a very conducive environment for you to perform your duties of informing, educating and entertaining the nation. The right to freedom of speech and expression, which include freedom of the press and

other media is entrenched in our supreme law and nobody can take that away from you. The media are thus not subjected to guesswork on the rights they have.

However, like other freedoms, this freedom is not unbridled and may be exercised only as long as it does not impinge on the freedom of others. Media practitioners must always keep in mind that the same Constitution that grants them freedoms, also stipulates that the dignity of all persons shall be inviolable, that no person shall be subject to interference with the privacy of their homes, correspondence or communication. Other restrictions on freedoms are contained in Article 21 (2) of the Constitution, which addresses the sovereignty and integrity of the country, national security, public order, decency and morality, defamation or incitement to an offence. This means, in access their constitutional rights, media practitioners has a responsibility to defend and protect the Namibian Constitution as part of their nation building.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Moulding the opinion of the nation is an enormous responsibility and it should be done with professionalism, integrity and honesty. This is where media ethics come in. Media ethics has many facets and because of its abstract nature, it is not always easy for everyone to agree on these issues. In fact, the news maker, the news reporter and the news consumer each has its own opinion on media ethics. The application of media ethics, therefore, requires a balancing act, a judgment, and a constant interaction with your conscience.

I am aware the media practitioners in Namibia to date differ on a uniform Code of Ethics, and this is disturbing. The SADC Protocol on Culture, Information and Sport, as well as the Information Policy for the Republic of Namibia call on media practitioners to adopt a Code of Ethics to boost public confidence and professionalism in the media sector. The Government does not want to impose such a code on media practitioners, but will continue advocating for and encouraging our media to develop and adopt a Code of Ethics. This is common practice in many professions and I don't understand why the Namibian media cannot agree on this.

With regard to responsibility, you need to remember that the primary purpose of your profession is to inform the people so that they may make judgments on the issues of their time. To quote the American Society of Newspaper Editors: "Newspapermen and women who abuse this power of their professional role for selfish motives or unworthy purposes are faithless to that public trust.

Responsibility in journalism requires that you don't subscribe to the notion of publish and be damned, but that you report news and information in a manner that will allow the public to judge.

Accuracy and objectivity go hand in hand with responsibility and to achieve accuracy and objectivity the media must be willing to find, verify, check and recheck facts to exclude bias and distortions creeping into reporting. Accuracy

and objectivity, as is the case with responsibility, equally flows from integrity, honesty, commitment to good faith with your public and plain hard work.

An issue of concern is the perception of the media that government is not open to scrutiny. The old adage goes that the pen is mightier than the sword and this shows that media practitioners hold an enormous influence. Therefore, it is important that, media must also be subject to scrutiny, just as the conduct of official power is subject to scrutiny. The freedom of the media is not under threat if the Government speaks out on media abuses. By the Constitutional provision the media and each citizens is guaranteed freedom of speech and expression, so are these rights applicable to the Government or any other entity for that matter. Therefore the government cannot look on when the nation is misinformed through the media.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The establishment of a Media Council and the appointment of a Media Mediator to address perceived media violations can go a long way to eliminate any misunderstandings in this regard. Although media practitioners agreed way back in 1993 at the first Prime Minister, Honorable Hage Geingob's consultative meeting with the media to get their house in order, adopt a Code of Ethics and establish a media council, nothing has come of these undertakings to date. An objective Media Council will play a role to preserve the freedom of the media, while it will also help to maintain and improve the standards of journalism and broadcasting. Regrettably, the profound disunity amongst the media in our country is the biggest stumbling block to get these institutions off the ground.

While I don't want to elaborate on media disunity, I think that you, as media practitioners should know that unity is strength and that if you tackle general issues of concern with one voice, your chances to succeed increase manifold.

As part of nation building, the media has to identify the news makers and educators from destroyers. For example a rapist, murderer and abusers should not be regarded as a news maker or educator. That means those type of people do not deserve publicity as it is tantamount to glorify their deeds. And should be left to the legal system to take its course.

Since his inauguration His Excellency President Hifikepunye Pohamba among others has declared war against corruption and call on efficient servers' delivery. The media can therefore play a role by exposing corrupt practices and those not provide the necessary servers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to conclude with a few remarks on access to information. We in government are fully aware that access to information is a prerequisite for responsible and accurate reporting, hence the Public Service Charter that call for providing information in a straightforward and clear manner.

In the same vain, the government is busy finalizing the Communication Bill. The guideline on which the bill is based is a result of wider consultations with stakeholders. That is because once the bill becomes a law we must all be part to its implementation.

I am looking forward at our discussions later today and I trust that we shall find mutually beneficial and workable solutions to enhance the free flow of responsible, accurate and objective information in the interest of all the people of our country and in protection of our constitution.

I thank you.

“THE ROLE OF UNESCO IN MEDIA FREEDOM”

REMARKS BY
DR. CLAUDIA HARVEY,
DIRECTOR, UNESCO WINDHOEK CLUSTER OFFICE AND
REPRESENTATIVE TO
ANGOLA, LESOTHO, NAMIBIA, SOUTH AFRICA AND SWAZILAND

MEDIA ROUNDTABLE AT THE POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA HOTEL
SCHOOL

13 JULY 2005

Honourable Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah
Honourable Bryan O'Linn, Acting Judge of the Supreme Court
Dr. Tjamua Tjivikua, Rector of the Polytechnic of Namibia
Ms. Loini Katoma, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Information and
Broadcasting,
Ms. Rianne Selle, Communication and Information Commissioner of the Namibia
National Commission for UNESCO
Members of the Media
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am here to underline the commitment of UNESCO to our common purpose. Firstly I would like to thank the Minister of Information and Broadcasting for accepting the invitation to this Roundtable, being organized by the World Press Freedom Day Adhoc Committee and for sharing with us the initiatives carried out so far to define Government strategy for the improvement of media freedom in Namibia. Let me also thank UNIC for collaborating with UNESCO in co-funding this event. We appreciate this opportunity for dialogue and welcome further dialogue and advocacy in promoting media freedom and responsibility not only in Namibia, but in the entire region.

UNESCO Communication and Information Sector fosters the building of "*Knowledge Societies*" and promotes the use of new technologies or ICTs in education, culture and science. One of UNESCO's fundamental tasks is that of promoting the *free flow of ideas and universal access to information and to contribute to the strengthening of communication and information capacities so as to empower communities and citizens and to enable them to participate effectively in the democratic process (UNESCO's programme and Budget, 2002 - 2003 pg. 151para. 2)*. One of UNESCO's fundamental aims is to use communication and information to promote freedom of expression, universal access to information, respect for cultural diversity and equal access to quality education.

UNESCO's role in media freedom is as old as the organization itself. Sixty years ago, the State Parties to the constitution of UNESCO, agreed and demonstrated

their determination to “develop and to increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding” (UNESCO Texts, page 7). The intensive campaign for freedom of expression and press freedom on the continent was reinforced in the early 1990s to bring to the world’s attention the importance of human rights of all humankind. Freedom of expression is a fundamental right of all world citizens that encourages confidence and invokes courage to press forward their demands for basic human rights such as freedom to education, freedom to practice and celebrate their cultures in diversity, freedom to apply and bring into the open their innovative ideas and the right to food and health services.

We are faced with a number of challenges associated with the emergence of an information society and the threat of a widening digital divide. In building “Information and Knowledge Societies, people need to be empowered through sharing of information. Multifaceted channels would have to be employed in the collection and distribution of information. We are witnesses to the world of technology that makes information delivery faster. The internet, computers, telephones, newspapers and television have enabled different people to reach out to each other. Sharing information through these means, the world is going through a process of building “Information and Knowledge Societies” in which people value their cultural diversity and encourage the increased and enriching relationships. The concept is based on an empowering social vision that encompasses plurality, inclusion, solidarity and participation. However, most of these media, and therefore most access is limited to the development world.

If emphasis is placed on the value of participation, then strategies must be put in place for the participation of ALL. This is why UNESCO places value on the development of community media and on infrastructural and human capacity building through its Governmental Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC).

Such community media include community radios and community multi-media centres that give people, especially those at the grassroots, the opportunity to

participate in development activities. These initiatives allow people the opportunity to learn new innovations, exchange ideas and experiences from within and from without. This makes the use of technologies in the delivery and exchange of information aimed at capacity building an urgent action. These mechanisms are aimed at providing equitable access to knowledge and closing the information gap between the rich and the poor in our societies. The idea manifests itself in the concept of taking information and knowledge right to people's door steps.

UNESCO emphasizes independence and pluralistic press and the media because as channels of communication and information they facilitate interaction through dialogue among people from different cultural backgrounds.

UNESCO is also promoting media independence in conflict areas where people are in greater need of information that enables them to survive and to play active roles in conflict resolution and allow smoother transition towards a culture of peace. Freedom of the press, pluralism and independence of the media, development of community newspapers and radio stations are crucial to the re-establishment of social bonds and to the reconciliation process.

UNESCO also defends the rights of journalists. In some situations, UNESCO joins the world wide advocacy to prevent the harassment and persecution.

UNESCO believes that governments can forge a mutual and reciprocal partnership with the media in order to promote a culture of peace and development through dialogue and commitment . One realizes that there is a need for access to information and the need for accurate and objective reporting. Member States of UNESCO and the United Nations Information Centre recognize that media and government have a duty to provide information to citizens. The media remain powerful tools in creating awareness among the public, of government policies and of the international and local social and economic situations.

Another role that UNESCO plays in media freedom is the provision of advisory services on media legislation and sensitization of governments and parliamentarians and other decision makers on the need for enacting new media and information laws or repealing the old and outdated ones. In cooperation with our partners, UNESCO is ready to respond to requests from governments and national authorities by providing expert missions, and technical logistical assistance or through the organization of meetings and other events, like this one, dealing with issues of critical concern to the media environment.

It is encouraging that this Roundtable is taking place at the time when media personnel are trying to redefine their role and contribution to the principles of the Millennium Development Goals, towards which all our efforts should be focused.

As we deliberate on media roadmap in Namibia, here today, you can count on UNESCO's support in terms of advocacy, capacity building and advice. Fortunately, we see less need for the role of defending the media in Namibia.

I wish all the participants attending this Roundtable success.

I thank you.

Pitfalls and Problems in the Private Media

by

Eberhard Hofmann

Namibia Editors' Forum Chairperson

“Pitfalls and problems of the private media” is the topic set first to open this roundtable. – Let us rather talk of challenges than of pitfalls and problems.

Who are the private media?

The print media: Three daily newspapers published in three languages – and if you look inside you discover more languages, overlapping in the advertising columns, sometimes on the readers’ letter page. Furthermore one coastal biweekly paper and four weekly papers, including a political party organ.

The electronic media, next to our public broadcaster: Various community and commercial radio programs.

What about the purely advertising media distributed to your garden gate or dropped in your post box?

What about community journals, confessional and church papers as well as in-house journals that venture far into the public domain? Not to be excluded is the volatile domain of the Internet which is still expanding but also destroying much of our time when we have to sift junk and spam products from what we really need.

Purely donor driven media have quickly been sorted out after the political heat of the transitional period after independence, 1990. The private media you see now are not only those that have survived but which have thrived despite of numerous odds and tribulations, some in-house, some external.

With the exception of a rather curious government advertising ban on the private daily in the official language – which is still being upheld – the media climate has been free and fair and without state interference since independence. We may not ignore it since “an injury to one is an injury to all”. Government should come on record to the private media what exactly may lead to such punitive measure. Government advertising is after all done with public funds.

Back to daily routine – Private newspapers are taxed which means that information and opinion in print are taxed. Furthermore by paying tax the private media add to the subsidy and contribute to the upkeep of state media which on their part also compete for their share of the limited advertising cake available in Namibia.

A pitfall and drawback daily overcome by the private media are the long distances to their valued readers, often found in low density areas. The distance covered for the distribution of the daily papers from the early morning hours to the return to the Windhoek home base adds up to close to 16000 km per day.

In the chain from the news room to the reader a paper is as strong as the weakest link, which may snap if the delivery van hits a kudu at Omatako.

Yet, for the balance and strengthening of society the private media remain indispensable as partners in democracy.

Eberhard Hofmann – Chairperson, Namibia Editors ' Forum

Windhoek, 13 July 2005

**THE ROLE OF THE STATE (PUBLIC) MEDIA IN NATION
BUILDING:
THE CASE OF NAMIBIA**

BY

**MR PROTASIOUS NDAUENDAPO,
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
NEW ERA PUBLICATIONS CORPORATION**

PRESENTED AT

**A MEDIA ROUND-TABLE ON PRESS FREEDOM AND ACCESS TO
INFORMATION, ORGANISED BY THE UNITED NATIONS
EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION
(UNESCO) WINDHOEK CLUSTER OFFICE AND THE UNITED NATIONS
INFORMATION CENTRE (UNIC) IN COLLABORATION WITH THE
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING,
13 JULY 2005, POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA'S
HOTEL SCHOOL, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA**

"The fewer the voices, the more blinkered the message. This has been one of the consequences of the patterns of ownership and control of media in our society. Ownership patterns are changing, control must still go through a transformation but those internal tasks must, on the whole, be performed by the media itself. It is now a free press, a press that is constitutionally beyond interference, but, like any other body with rights it must now undertake the obligation of its own transformation in order best to reflect the complex and diverse nature of our society".

The Task Group on the South African Media Environment, 1996.

The hosting of today's media round table on press freedom and access to information by the two sponsoring international institutions, namely UNESCO and UNIC in collaboration with the Namibia Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, could not have taken place at the right time. I therefore, would like to congratulate them for the foresight and timely decision taken to bring policy formulators, decision makers and media practitioners together to share views on such a very important topic.

This meeting is also taking place just a few days after the administration of our Second President His Excellency Mr Hifikepuye Pohamba had successfully pass the 100 days in office record, building in continuity on the successful record in nation building set by our founding President Dr Sam Nujoma.

For historical importance, it would not be an understatement to make here today that under President Nujoma's administration. The media in our country enjoyed unprecedented freedom of the media and reasonable access to information from government. This took place against the background of a history of media repression and restriction that apartheid South Africa imposed on the media prior to Namibia's independence in 1990. Our fundamental law, the Namibia constitution provides for freedom of the press and other media as one of the in [inalienable] able rights given to the country's citizen's. The current administration of President Pohamba seems to be following in the same footsteps of the previous administration as far as freedom of the press and access to information are concerned.

The Namibian constitution, in my view, has set the tone and parameters for the role of the media in nation building in the sense that our founding fathers and mothers have recognised the important role the media have to play in nurturing, building and sustaining the new nation that was formed on 21 march 1990 out of the ashes of ethnic and divisive past experiences of Apartheid.

Based on the constitutional provisions, the government of the day embarked on the process of defining the role of the media in nation building. To this end, in 1991 the first-ever Information Policy was formulated and adopted, state-owned mass media institutions such as the Namibia Press Agency (NAMPA) and New Era Publications Corporation (New Era) were established and the then South West African Broadcasting Corporation (SWABC) was transformed into the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation (NBC).

In setting up new public/state-owned mass media institutions as well as the formulation and adoption of new policy frameworks on information in the country, the Namibia government was influenced by past experiences and the divisive role the media had played under the Apartheid South African illegal occupation of Namibia of pitting Namibian of various ethnic and cultural background against each other through the spread of disinformation, hate speech, propaganda and anti-liberation messages.

As being part of the Team heavily involved in getting-up the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of an independent Namibia, it was very clear and imperative that the media in an independent Republic must play a distinct and different role from what it used to do under the apartheid rule.

Therefore, the over righting philosophy was that the public/state-owned media must play the following role/s in the process of nation building:

- National reconciliation;
- National development;
- Assisting towards narrowing the urban and rural divide;
- Contribute towards fostering a culture of political tolerance, diversity and promotion of a democratic culture;
- Assisting towards the free flow of ideas, diverse various and respect of diverse views;
- Contributing towards language/s development, especially the official English language, and literacy;
- Fostering a culture of national debates on issues of national importance; and
- Assisting towards the promotion of socio and economic well-beings of Namibians.

The afore-mentioned objectives constitute the general mandates given to state-owned media institutions as part of their roles in the process of nation building. However, specific mandates, such as, for instance, to provide emphasis on issues of national interests, promote national reconciliation and development, as well as concentrating on events happening in rural areas, among others.

Equally, it is important to note that the role/s of state-owned media institutions in nation building are being conducted in line with international and national frameworks such as the UN General Assembly's Resolution 59 of 14 December 1946 and resolution 45/76A of 11 December 1990, UNESCO's resolution 25C/104 of 1989, Windhoek declaration on promoting an independent and pluralistic African Press, SADC's Protocol on Sport, Culture and Information, Namibia's Information Policy and the envisaged Information Communication Technology (ICT) policy.

On a practical level, the state-owned media institutions in Namibia play significant roles in nation building in the following manners:

- provide unbiased, fair, accurate and balanced reporting to diverse political views;

- regularly provide platforms for the views of minority groups and rural communities in the country;
- jealously protect editorial independence, so as to promote a culture of free speech and debates on issues of national importance;
- offer substantive coverage to issues affecting the national economy, i.e. the SME sector and BEE, in support of national economic developmental objectives as contained in Vision 2030 and NDP11;
- convey information on diverse subject matters aimed empowering all Namibians in all the 13 political regions of the country for the improvement of their socio and economic status and/or living of standard, e.g. NBC Radio Services.

While state-owned media institutions have been playing important and significant roles in nation building which the private media might not be attracted to or interested in due to the enormous financial costs involved with little or no return on investment, there seems to be a deliberate distortion on the part of the opponents of the state involvement in the ownership and control of the media generally and in Namibia in particular.

I could have imagine the type and nature of Namibian society we could have had if the Namibian government could not have taken the decision not to get involved in the ownership and control of the media in the country. Obviously, I am of the view, that should that have happened, a great disservice and injustice could have been done to our people, for only certain views mostly conveying the interests of the rich and powerful could have been becoming the 'dominant' views in our society. Equally, only certain political views that suit the interests of the few could also have been the order of business of newspapers, television and radio stations in the land of the Brave. Which could have happened to the views of the poor and the marginalised?

In the case of Namibia, I would strongly argue, that the continuous involvement of the state in the media is imperative and conform to the notion of 'Public Sphere'.

According to John Keane (1993), the public media distribute entitlements to speak and to be heard unevenly. Oliver Boyd – Barrett (1995): 233) says that "A responsible nation-wide democratic system requires a media system which is coterminous with it and which can generate discussion of issues of public concern in a way which does not favour partisan interests, whether there be the interests of particular political parties, the interests of media bosses or media professionals."

CONCLUSION

The state-owned media institutions in Namibia play a greater role in the process of nation building as they are contributing towards national reconciliation, economic development, fostering a culture of democracy, tolerance for diverse views and the narrowing of the rural-urban divide, more so what the private-owned media are able and prepared to do.

Therefore, the roles of the state-owned and private-owned media institutions in our country should be complimentary of each other as both are supposed to serve the interests of their readers, listeners and viewers.

This call for better co-operation between the state-owned and private-owned media institution in Namibia in matters of common interests so as to promote better service delivery, professional and ethical conduct, efficiency and better return on investments, in line with best corporate and business practices.

I have no doubt that if the afore-mentioned details can be realised, then both the stat-owned and private-owned media institutions would better serve the people of Namibia as they continue to accelerate the process of nation building.

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**Media Roundtable
on Press Freedom and Access to Information
Polytechnic Hotel School
13 July 2005**

The State and Status of Community Media in Namibia

By
Natasha Tibinyane
KCR Station Manager

I couldn't help but notice that community media was left out in the theme of today's gathering and I wonder if community media would have been invited to make a presentation here today if the Coordinator of the Namibia Community Radio Network (NCRN), was not serving on the committee that organized this roundtable, albeit in his capacity as Acting Director of Misa-Namibia. This situation re-affirms one of community media's biggest challenges – being ignored or regarded as less important than public or private media. This is happening while the importance of community media in not only nation building but the democratization thereof is increasingly recognized around the world, especially in developing countries. I would like to from the outset make it clear that I will largely speak from a community radio perspective, as it is the area in which I've been focusing on the past three years, but it is important to note that the experiences of those in community radio are practically similar to that of community print and television.

Community media and nation building:

One of the fundamental principals of community media is to be the "voice of the voiceless". In Namibia "the voiceless" can be defined as women, children, the elderly, sexual minorities, the unemployed, the poor, those living with HIV & AIDS, rural dwellers, the list can go on and on, depending from where you stand. What is obvious is that those I have mentioned are the great majority of this nation but their voices are not heard.

In this city community radio is probably the best option considering our low adult literacy rates and the lack of a reading culture. Community print and television initiatives would in my opinion be more viable in urban settings such as Windhoek and larger towns. If given the opportunity and the support to establish a sustainable community radio station; communities can through the sharing of information and the broadcasting of quality educational programming that are socially, politically and economically relevant make informed decisions about their lives as individuals and as citizens of this country.

Community radio allows communities to debate and discuss issues that directly or indirectly affect them and collectively come to a consensus on what actions should be taken.

Community radio gives ordinary people, who thought radio is a medium for the educated and well-spoken, the opportunity to learn how to produce radio programmes, do interviews, write scripts and use the internet.

Community radio gives people the opportunity to celebrate their own cultures, affirm their own dignity and identify and promote social responsibility and critical thinking.

Most importantly, community radio gives people the platform to express themselves freely without fear of victimization and gives them the pride and dignity that comes from a sense of ownership. Now if that is not nation building, participatory democracy, I don't know what is.

Challenges:

What I've just described is the ideal we are striving for in Namibia but has been achieved in countries less developed than us such as Mali and Mozambique.

Compared to other Southern African countries, community radio is a relatively new concept in Namibia. The first such initiative was KCR in 1993. We have six community radio stations of which all of them are located in urban areas. There are currently five community radio initiatives: Ocean Wave (Swakop), Omaheke Community Radio (Gobabis) and more in Oshakati, Keetmanshoop and Otjiwarongo.

Most of the above initiatives are community initiated and we all are members of the NCRN, which was a project of MISA-Namibia until August 2004 when it was divested. It now is an autonomous body with its own board of directors consisting of members from community radio stations and initiatives.

Rehoboth has two community newspapers, Die Akasia and Die Spioen.

Unfortunately The Caprivi Vision in Katima Mulilo and another community newspaper in Keetmanshoop are off the streets due to the main challenge all community media are facing – the lack of funding.

Community media around the world is largely funded by donor agencies. The problem with this scenario is that their funding interests change as their political interest change and it is short term. This is why the emphasis should be put on government or the state being the main partner in the establishment and strengthening of community media.

For example, the South African government established the MDDA Fund through which government provides resources for community radio stations and initiatives to receive equipment, training and infrastructure.

The NCRN in the Draft Communications Bill suggested that a Universal Access Fund be established where a percentage of the license fees paid by commercial radio stations be made available for community radio stations and initiatives. This provides initiatives the opportunity to be able to at least have the basics and gives them the tools to become sustainable and not have to rely on anyone for funding after at least two years.

The reason why we have so many initiatives is because they lack equipment, which is all one needs to apply for a license at the NCC. Most initiatives have been struggling for years to acquire the equipment because it is very expensive. Maybe I should have also mentioned at the outset that the maintenance of radio is VERY EXPENSIVE.

Another challenge we are facing is that for training we again rely on funding from donors, which again has to fit within their socio-political scope, and after we train our mostly unemployed volunteers and give them the skills that make them attractive to commercial stations – we loose them. Now we at KCR do not have a problem with that because we also see ourselves as a training ground for future public and commercial broadcasters and have a huge pool to chose from. But the same cannot be said for community radio stations in other parts of the country where the pool is not as big. If government supports us in the continuous training of people we would always have the extras to fall back on.

Conclusion:

In developing countries and in particular Southern Africa, community media or community radio is increasingly becoming the preferred medium. Countries such as Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia have proved that people do not only want to listen to the latest music hits but also want to be educated, informed and lastly entertained. KCR, although off-air for a number of years, is

slowly but surely becoming the preferred radio station among those living in Katutura and Khomasdal again. Our reality is that due to the lack of funding our progress is much slower than what it would have been if we had the support we needed.

As far as I know government has never directly supported the development of community media considering the important role it can play in bringing about positive change in society and nation building. Hopefully this roundtable will bring about a change in the attitude of not only government but THANK YOU all stakeholders in nation building towards community media.

**Address on the occasion of a
Round Table Discussion
on
Media and nation building
13 July 2005
Robin Tyson:
Chairperson: MISA Namibia**

The Honourable Minister of Information and Broadcasting,
Dr. Claudia Harvey, UNESCO Director for the Windhoek Cluster,
Colleagues from the media,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

The media are essential for the continued development and broadening of democratic values in the country. Only last week, the G8 meeting in Scotland confirmed the transfer to Africa of billions of Euros, but stressed again that it was important that African countries themselves commit themselves to ensuring that this money was spent in a responsible manner, with high levels of accountability and a lack of corrupt practices.

The functions of the media in a democratic society, according to Graham Murdock, are to give a truthful, comprehensive and insightful account of events, to provide a forum for the exchange of comments and criticisms, project a representative pictures of the various groups in a society, to present the goals and values of society and to provide full access to information and knowledge, for citizens to make sense of their situation.

MISA stands by those functions in order to further support and encourage the democratic exchange of views in the country.

In the Namibian context, we recognise and appreciate the efforts of the government since independence to open up and liberalize the airwaves. The broadcasting sector has gone from one broadcaster – the SWABC, to a myriad of commercial and community radio and television stations.

Even these commercial media organisations, however, need to realise their duty to society, and their own role in nation building. While we do recognise the essentially 'hands off' attitude of the present regulator, there are certain worrying signs that need to be addressed.

Radio stations that continue to renege on their duty of carrying Namibian (not South African, British or American) news, stations that continue to fail in their duty to promote local Namibian musicians, and stations that, while making handsome profits, fail to plough back that into the development of media training institutions and further the qualifications of producers and presenters.

During a recent visit to Johannesburg, I was interested to discover that commercial radio stations have stringent license conditions. This includes their requirement to have relevant local news content, a demand with some stations (I spoke to Kaya FM) to have a 60% speech content and 40% music content, and a requirement, by legislation, to train staff. Kaya FM are compelled to spend R200 000 a year on training their staff. We cannot accept commercial print and electronic media continuing to reap profits from Namibian readers, listeners and viewers, without putting something back into the community in return.

We remain committed to the media environment in Namibia – committed to enhancing it, developing it, expanding it and ensuring that the media act at all times in the best interests of society as a whole.

In order to further this end several initiatives have been undertaken by our association, including the drafting of the Code of Ethics for Namibian journalists. We believe that it is vital that the media work from a professional base, and we encourage self-regulation of this important sector. It is unfortunate that, to date, this Code of Ethics remains a paper document only. Some media institutions have embraced the code, but methods of enforcement remain elusive.

In addition there are other media organizations that, while not specifically boycotting the code, or raising any objections to it, are just perhaps not that interested. Some believe that the public, the readers, listeners and viewers, are the only 'body' that the media are accountable to. We, on the other hand, believe that the Code of Ethics can go a long way to ensuring that the public, as well as other involved parties such as the government and private sector, are given some element of protection from irresponsible and inaccurate reporting. To this end we again encourage all media – government, public broadcaster, commercial and community radio stations and publications, to join us in attempting to further promote media professionalism and accountability.

However, this should not be taken to mean that such a Code will protect anybody from fair comment and criticism. Encouraging lively debate on issues of national issues remains an important tenant of any democracy. In addition, there can be an argument that it is those in positions of power and authority that, above all, need to be criticized. The media have an important role, especially in this country, of ensuring that government and parastatals are scrutinized and kept to their own promises.

MISA Namibia are pleased to have worked on the drafting of several important pieces of media legislation, including the new Communications Act and Access to Information Act.

MISA also strives to make itself available at numerous forums in order to give the media point of view on various important national issues. This includes the recent Media Barometer, the Community Radio Round Table, World Press Freedom Day celebrations and, earlier this year we were honoured to be invited to the National Assembly in order to address new parliamentarians on how the media can be more involved in communicating matters of national policy.

We are proud to remain, through our wide and experienced membership, a source of knowledge and expertise in the field of media and will continue to offer our input in matters of national interest as far as the media are concerned. We believe that, with this further sharing of ideas, we can continue to enhance the media landscape in the country and, through this, further the aims and objectives of our founding fathers, who envisaged, through the Constitution, a Namibia with a bright, hopeful future.

I thank you.

AGENDA
Media ROUNDTABLE

**“The role of the media in Nation Building a mutually reinforcing relationship
between the public and private media and government”**

Polytechnic Hotel

13 July 2005

10h00

Rappatourer Ms Christi Werner

10:00 – 10:5 Opening remarks – Acting Judge of the Supreme Court, Bryan O’Linn, Facilitator

10:05 – 10:10 Welcome to Polytechnic – Rector Polytechnic, Dr. T. Tjivikua

10:10 - 10:25 **“The Role of the Media in Nation Building - a mutually reinforcing relationship between public and private media and government”** an Overview by Minister of Information and Broadcasting, **Honourable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah.**

10:25 – 10:35 The Role of UNESCO in Media Freedom – Dr. Claudia Harvey, Director, UNESCO’s Windhoek Cluster and Representative to Angola, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland

10:35 – 10:40 **Pitfalls and problems in the private media** – Namibia Editors’ Forum, Mr. E. Hofmann

10:40 - 10:45 **Role of the state media** – Protasius Ndauendapo, Chief Executive Officer, NEW ERA

10:45 – 10:50 **The state and status of community media in Namibia** – Ms. Natasha Tibinyane, Station Manager, Katutura Community Radio

10: 55 -11:00 **MISA Namibia’s role in Nation Building** – Mr. Robin Tyson, MISA Namibia’s Chairperson of the Governing Council

11:10 - 11:30 Tea

11:30 -12:30 Topic Discussions

- Code of Ethics
- Media Council and Ombudsperson
- Relationship between Private media, State media, MISA and government
- Access to State and Private Sector Information

12:30:12:45 **Plenary and Way forward**

12:45:13:00 Closing Remarks – UNIC

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

15:00 Finalisation of Joint Communiqué

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**MEDIA ROUNDTABLE
POLYTECHNIC HOTEL SCHOOL
13 JULY 2005
10H00
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**MEDIA ROUNDTABLE
POLYTECHNIC HOTEL SCHOOL
13 JULY 2005
10H00
ATTENDANCE LIST**

19	Nancy Muinjo	University of Namibia_Media Student	Cell: 081 288 3340	Fax: 061-250349	nancymuinjo@yahoo.com
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