



MISA NAMIBIA E-Newsletter

National Director visits USA



Mathew Haikali in front of the Indianapolis Monument, Indiana, USA

The National Director of MISA Namibia was invited as part of a group from 19 countries to participate in a project supported by the United States Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. It is a

part of the international visitor leadership program. It aims to demonstrate to participants the rights and responsibilities of citizens in the American political process to influence and effect political, social, and economic change.

The program provided the participants with an overview of the structure of the U.S. government, with emphasis on the federal system and the separation of powers.

It also provided the par-

ticipants with an understanding of the diversity of U.S. society and examined how citizens organize themselves to articulate their interests and views at the local, state, and federal levels.

The project was divided into different components with the participants being divided into small groups and provided with an opportunity to look at various themes in different cities. *The MISA Namibia National Director visited* Washington DC, Santa Fe, Indianapolis, and Boston.

UNAM wins Media Student Debate '06

The University of Namibia's (UNAM) media students won this year's edition of MISA Namibia's annual debate between students of The Polytechnic and UNAM.

This year's topic was, *Is it necessary to have a media council in Namibia?* UNAM's team consisted of Tendayi Chirawu, Paulo Coelho and Martha Kasanda. The Polytechnic team consisted of Bonifatius Roelf, Romeo Sinkala and Christine Mostert. The debate was held at the Constituency Channel studio at Parliament.

The debate was lively and had some participants on their feet at some stages.

The demonstration of gruesome pictures on the front page of a weekly paper to strengthen Polytechnics argument of why a media council is necessary did not help them win. It was UNAM's vig-

orous debate and good research that clinched the beautiful trophy for them.

Ferdinand Tjombe of NSBC, Gladwin Groenewaldt of the NBC and Werani Tjirambo, Communications Manager at MISA judged the debate.

UNAM argued against the establishment of a media council.



MISA Namibia congratulates The Namibian and Trustco Group International on the establishment of Free Press Printers.

MISA Namibia appeals for responsible use of popular programmes

On Monday July 31, 2006 the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) released a statement to the media. In the statement the Corporation stated that “a wave of rather abusive discussions on the telephone lines of the various radio services during some of the popular programmes....have become a source of concern to the NBC.”

The NBC appealed to participants in these public programmes “to exercise their freedom of expression with wholesome discretion and maximum integrity.”

In a statement MISA Namibia said that it realised the importance of these programmes and called for the responsible use thereof.

Christof Maletsky, MISA Namibia National Governing Council Chairperson, said, “While people have the freedom to express their views, there are certain responsibilities that go with it.”

Fearing the suspension of the programmes MISA Namibia supported the appeal by the NBC but clearly rejected the call to censor callers and curtail freedom of expression.

We also urged participants of the programmes to stick to the rules of the programmes.

MISA Namibia also called on the Moderators of these shows to be fair and be as objective as possible. Moderators should not take sides during these phone-in programs. They are there to serve the nation.

Training of moderators will be supported by MISA Namibia. We call on the NBC Management to work with us to surmount challenges of the corporation.

MISA Namibia further appealed to political leaders and their followers to refrain from using the NBC phone-in programs to make derogatory and inflammatory comments about those who do not share their ideology.



National Director takes on Challenge

MISA Namibia National Director, Mathew Haikali on August 24, 2006 acted on a challenge laid down by CoD Member of Parliament Norah Schimming Chase.

The CoD Deputy President on June 16, 2006 challenged the media and individuals to talk to their elected representatives to come up with ideas for an access to information bill when she participated at a discussion forum between MP's and journalists. At that event, organised by MISA Namibia, the veteran MP argued in favour of establishment of access to information legislation.

When Haikali met Schimming Chase in her office at Parliament he

was armed with an arsenal of draft access to information laws, principles of such laws and a multitude of related material.

At that meeting Schimming Chase expressed willingness to introduce a private members bill on the issue. She noted that when MP's ask questions in Parliament Ministers can refuse to give information about a certain issue.

She also expressed concern over the delay in publishing the findings of the various Presidential Commissions of Enquiries. Schimming Chase is also not convinced that Namibia can fight a meaningful campaign against corruption in the absence of specific access to information legislation.



Norah Schimming Chase and Kazenambo Kazenambo at the discussion forum between MP's and journalists

NGC meets Information and Broadcasting Minister

MISA Namibia's National Governing Council (NGC) met with Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah on August 22, 2006.

The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the members of MISA Namibia's new NGC to the Minister and to discuss issues of mutual concern. The new NGC was elected at MISA Namibia's AGM on June 30, 2006.

MISA Namibia National Director, Mathew Haikali says, "It was a fruitful discussion characterised by frank exchange of ideas. We have raised the issue of access to information and the introduction of appropriate legislation. The Minister raised the need to train liaison officers to sufficiently deal with media requests for information."

MISA Namibia informed the Government, through the Minister,

that they can raise funds and appoint facilitators to conduct training programmes so as to facilitate improved access to information.

"We are hoping that, following the meeting with the minister, efforts will be intensified to come up with the long-awaited Access to Information legislation. Public bodies have an obligation to disclose information because every member of the public has the right to receive information," says MISA Namibia Chairperson, Christof Maletsky.

He said the absence of a comprehensive document dealing with this right has prevented the maximum disclosure of certain information in Namibia. "The Minister agrees that not every piece of



From left: MISA Namibia NGC Chairperson Christof Maletsky Adviser to the Minister, Mvula ya Nangolo, Nicolene McNab Assistant of the Minister, Minister Nandi Ndaitwah, Rene Lotter, Surihe Gaomas, Sandra Williams and Gladwin Groenewaldt.

information is sensitive.

We hope that workshops will soon be organised to develop a comprehensive document acceptable to all parties," said Maletsky.

MISA Namibia on New Era Editors suspension

MISA Namibia issued a statement on Wednesday August 30 calling on top officials in both the Namibian Government and the ruling Swapo Party to stop furthering their political agendas through the control of public media institutions.

In a strongly worded statement MISA Namibia said, "Although funded by the Namibian Government, through taxpayers' money, the Government does not own, and should refrain from interfering in the operations, of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), New Era newspaper and the Namibia Press Agency (NAMPA).

MISA Namibia noted that Government's control of these institutions stifle editorial independence and free, fair and objective reporting.

Recently, New Era newspaper suspended its News Editor, Daoud Vries, after a letter criticising the Kwanyama tribe in Namibia was published in the paper.

Misa is deeply concerned about the increasing interference of political office bearers on decisions taken in editorial rooms of the public funded media houses.

"It is quite evident that Mr. Vries was suspended because of pressure from the Government and the ruling party. He has become a victim of political infighting," says MISA Namibia Chairperson Christof Maletsky.

MISA Namibia strongly condemns the suspension of Mr. Vries and views it as a direct threat to editorial

independence and media freedom in Namibia.

MISA Namibia expressed disapproval of any Government and political interference, because it compromises editorial independence, and creates a culture of fear and self censorship in the news rooms.

"This interference not only hamper diversification of opinions and views, it also denies Namibians their constitutional and fundamental right to freedom of expression on issues that are critical and topical to their livelihood.

MISA Namibia calls on the board and Management of New Era for the immediate and unconditional lift of the suspension of its News Editor.



Your new E-Newsletter

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*Committed to promoting and
advancing media freedom*

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MISA Namibia's new electronic newsletter will be sent to all members and interested individuals once a month. If you have received this it means we have your contact detail. Now you must make sure that you are a paid-up MISA Namibia member.

We realised that our members were not sufficiently informed about our activities and therefore some thought that "MISA Namibia is doing nothing." This is but one of the attempts to keep our members informed about our toil.

If you can share this newsletter with your colleagues please do so. If they are not paid up members please inform us and we will give them a call.

If you do not want any MISA Namibia correspondence please reply to this email with the words "take me off mailing list!" Please feel free to add us to your mailing list.

The newsletter looks back at all MISA Namibia activities during a specific month and informs you what to expect during the upcoming months.

It will not replace the quarterly newsletter produced by Echoes and will not be published.

We are already starting to plan for World Press Freedom Day on May 3. Please forward any suggestions on how we can celebrate the day to us.

The Namibia Media Awards will be held during the first quarter of 2007. A committee, consisting of the organiser, judges and MISA Namibia NGC members, are currently looking at ways to improve the awards. Bank Windhoek already pledged to contribute to next years awards, thank you Bank Windhoek.

We will soon call for submissions for a brand new comment and opinion service on our website. Watch this space.

MISA Namibia host awards "thank you" cocktail

MISA Namibia and Namibia Strategic Business Communications (NSBC) held a cocktail function with representatives of the business community and leading institutions at the Polytechnic Hotel School on Thursday August 24, 2006.

The event was held to express their gratitude to all who gave sponsorships, bought tables and contributed in kind to the Namibia Media Awards.

Chairperson of the MISA Namibia National Governing Council, Christof Maletsky said, "We could not have hosted such a successful event without the very generous support from our business sector. We are eternally grateful for your support."

He also announced that the next awards will be held in the first quarter of 2007 and urged journal-

ists from both the private and public media to start to prepare for it. Ferdinand Tjombe, NSBC Chief Executive, said that it was the norm in Namibia that organisers of events take the contributions of sponsors and then never talk to them again, until they need money again. He says that it is important to acknowledge the sponsors for their valuable contribution and afford them the necessary dignity and respect they deserve.

Tjombe urged the business community to consider supporting the Namibia Media Awards again and thereby actively assist in the improvement of the standard of journalism in the country.

Public Relations representative of Telecom Namibia, Mildred Williams, said that by contributing

to the Awards Telecom Namibia formed an alliance with the media fraternity in celebrating journalism excellence.

Helene Badenhorst of Bank Windhoek's Marketing and Corporate Communication Services said, "By supporting the 2007 Namibia Media

Awards, Bank Windhoek strives to contribute and encourage journalists to deliver quality reporting that will lead to the improvement of our country and the lives of all Namibian citizens."

Bank Windhoek committed themselves to the Namibia Media Awards by announcing that they will again sponsor it in 2007.

All sponsors, supporters and judges received a framed certificate of appreciation for their contributions.

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