

The Position Paper process

The Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) Position Paper was finalised taking into account public comments received in February 2001, the public hearings conducted by the parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Communication in March 2001, and consultations with stakeholders throughout 2001.

This Position Paper contains the underlying philosophy and rationale of the MDDA, and as such represents government policy that has guided the drafting of the MDDA Bill, which will be debated in Parliament during 2002.

The Executive Summary is available in all official languages on request.

This Position Paper is also available on the GCIS website:

<http://www.gcis.gov.za>

"Everyone has a right to freedom of expression, which includes:

- (a) freedom of the press and other media, and
- (b) freedom to receive or impart information or ideas."

From the South African Constitution, Chapter Two, Section 16

"Open debate and transparency in government and society are crucial elements of reconstruction and development. This requires an information policy which guarantees active exchange of information and opinion among all members of society..... The democratic government must encourage the development of all tiers of media – public, community and private. However, it must seek to correct the skewed legacy of apartheid where public media were turned into instruments of National Party policy; where community media were repressed; where private media are concentrated in the hands of a few monopolies, and where a few individuals from the white community determine the content of media. New voices at national, regional and local levels, and genuine competition rather than a monopoly of ideas, must be encouraged".

From the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) base document, 1994

A pluralistic press is "the end of monopolies of any kind and the existence of the greatest number of newspapers, magazines and periodicals reflecting the widest possible range of opinion within the community".

1991 Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press

Government should "facilitate the process of setting up a statutorily recognised media development agency comprised of independently recognised elected trustees, which agency will operate a statutorily recognised subsidy system for community and independent media in South Africa".

Comtask Report, 1996

"A central public interest principle in broadcasting is that of universal access, that is, the availability of broadcasting services to all citizens. In South Africa it is also desirable to expand the concept of access from the right to receive information to include greater access to the means of production in broadcasting. The question of access relates directly to the principle of diversity. Access to choice and diversity of choice includes access to a diverse range of language, cultural, religious and regional programming. The real significance of diversity within the framework of national unity is that it secures other benefits for society such as a substantial degree of media pluralism. At least five dimensions of diversity are: media functions; content; representation of different groups and people; geography or locale; and media ownership limitations".

White Paper on Broadcasting Policy, May 1998

"Society benefits from free, independent, and pluralistic media. But to achieve this, a supportive policy environment is required, and it must be proactively encouraged by public and private sectors, the international community and multilateral agencies...[One initiative would be to] develop independent media support agencies (voluntary or statutory) which provide assistance through loans and subsidies, and/ or other measures such as postal rate or connectivity cost reductions (e.g. the Media Development and Diversity Agency being established in South Africa)".

Resolution of the Global Knowledge II Conference, Malaysia, March 2000



"It is recommended that the current attempts to establish the Media Diversity Agency be given greater impetus. The private sector should be encouraged to support such an initiative and if necessary funding and support should be made available by both government and the private sector to promote and encourage greater diversity in ownership".

South African Human Rights Commission, Faultlines: Inquiry into Racism in the Media, August 2000. (Supported by the SA National Editors Forum)

"Democracy requires a media that is free from state or corporate control. Throughout the 20th century it has been recognised that corporate control can pose as great a threat to media democracy as state control. The state has a duty to create conditions for a diverse and democratic media. One such measure is anti-monopoly controls. Another measure to correct structural inequalities in the market is to encourage and support new media. The initiative by the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) [to set up a Media Development and Diversity Agency] should therefore be encouraged and supported."

Declaration of Principles on Information, Power and Democracy adopted in Cape Town on 10 October, 2000. Endorsed by the Institute for Democratic Alternatives (Idasa) and the London-based freedom of expression NGO Article 19

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