EXECUTIVE SUMMARY *(English)*

South Africa's media history reflects the fissures and divisions within society as well as the distribution of power. The challenge of democratic transformation affects all spheres of social life, including the institutions and practices of the media.

Government is committed to creating an agency to promote access to the media by marginalised groups and to enhance media diversity. This follows a Cabinet decision based on a Comtask recommendation in 1996. It is in accordance with the Constitution, Bill of Rights and the Reconstruction and Development Programme and is further motivated by the National Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, which emphasises freedom of expression and media diversity, and the need for mechanisms to ensure that this is achieved. It follows an unsuccessful attempt by civil society to form such a body in the early 1990s.

The motivation for an independent, separately located and cost-effective Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) rests on the need for a body of respected media specialists and other public figures that will, through funding, facilitation and research, develop expertise around media development and diversity and ensure their realisation. It will operate on the best principles of corporate governance with a mandate and requisite resources. It will operate at arms length from government, the media industry and other donors.

As the world moves rapidly towards an information society, it is critical that all citizens have access to the widest range of information and opinion in order to participate effectively in an increasingly integrated world at local, national and international levels. Government has made access to information integral to its reconstruction and development programme.

The MDDA, like the programme of Multi-Purpose Community Centres, is a key initiative towards this objective. It will help alter the communications environment in a way that builds infrastructure and fosters the emergence of media reflecting the experiences and perspectives of the marginalised. In other words, while the MDDA will not by itself bring about the complete transformation of the media, it will, through its funding, facilitation and research functions, play a catalytic role in altering the media landscape in a way that will be conducive to broader changes.

Defining media development and diversity:

Media development involves promoting an enabling environment to help redress exclusion and marginalisation of groups and interests from access to media - as owners, managers and producers of media. Media diversity is about ensuring that all interests and sectors have affordable access to a range of views and information sources fully reflective of our society.

The achievement of diversity is also facilitated by the availability, to a diverse range of media, small and large, of the means of distribution.

Media in South Africa:

Whilst much has been done since the advent of democracy to address problems of media development and diversity, it has clearly not been enough. The density of media infrastructure

per capita remains low. Media ownership is still concentrated and does not meet the needs of all groups and interests. Representivity is still inadequate at management, editorial and general staffing levels.

South African experience has shown that market forces, opportunities for broadcast licences and changes in ownership, while very important, cannot on their own fully achieve this transformation. Initiatives such as the MDDA are needed to spur on the process.

Drawing on experience:

International experience shows that support schemes to promote media development and diversity are not new. They have been implemented in Europe since the 1950s on the basis that market forces alone would not achieve sufficient diversity. Indeed, the evidence is that the market on its own tends towards increased concentration, which can inhibit freedom of expression and a diversity of views.

An earlier attempt to form a voluntary support mechanism, the Independent Media Diversity Trust, eventually failed for lack of funding. This has reinforced the view that only initiatives firmly rooted in a partnership of government and the media, and underpinned by statutory authority, will have a sustainable impact.

The character of the MDDA and its relationship with other bodies:

The MDDA will be an independent, statutory body operating at an arms-length from government, the private sector and any other donors. Its mandate will be to promote diversity and development in print, broadcast and "new media".
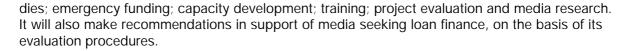
The MDDA will have a nine-person Board nominated by Parliament through a public process, and appointed by the President. Places on the Board will be reserved for nominees from each of government, print media, broadcast media and community media, while the remaining five will be nominated by the public. The Board will appoint a CEO who will, in conjunction with the Board, appoint a small highly skilled and adequately resourced staff.

Apart from its primary role of media support, the MDDA will commission research and make recommendations to government, the media industry and other relevant bodies. The MDDA will relate to all bodies with a direct or indirect interest in media development and diversity. The MDDA will hold an annual stakeholders' meeting where such bodies will consider the MDDA's annual report.

The beneficiaries and the nature of the support:

The main beneficiaries of direct and indirect support will be community media, as well as small commercial media, including radio, television, print and new media. There will be particular emphasis on projects that bring disadvantaged communities and sectors - particularly women, rural people, the disabled, illiterate people, working class and poor people - into the information and communications loop.

Support will be of a funding and non-funding nature, and will include direct and indirect subsi-

dies; emergency funding; capacity development; training; project evaluation and media research. It will also make recommendations in support of media seeking loan finance, on the basis of its evaluation procedures.

The MDDA's guiding principle in making funding decisions and loan recommendations will be the contribution that projects make to media development and diversity. It will seek to promote sustainability, and to fund projects that have good governance practices. Other considerations include community participation and equity plans.

The MDDA's budget:

The MDDA needs adequate financing to cover networking, training, capital and operational costs, as well as feasibility studies and project evaluation. It will also commission research on media development and diversity. Its operational needs, including performance evaluations of projects, should represent no more than 12% of total costs.

The resources needed to address the immediate backlog comes to a total of R256m, over five years.

Government will initially contribute in the region of two thirds of the budget, while the remainder should come from the media industry and funds raised by the Universal Service Agency through its levy on telecommunications. It should be noted that government's contribution will include the support for community radio infrastructure and programme development already given through the Department of Communications, and funds allocated to GCIS under the MTEF.