

'Dying' SABC board to be dissolved as soon as possible - minister

 [Bylssa Sikiti da Silva](#)

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The 'dying' SABC board, which is said to be dysfunctional and lacking quorum and moral authority after a seventh member - IEC chief electoral officer Pansy Tlakula - quit last week, is set to be unconditionally dissolved 'as soon as possible'. This was revealed yesterday, 16 June 2009, at Wits University in Johannesburg by minister of communications Sphiwe Nyanda during a public debate hosted by the MJ Naidoo Foundation to outline a vision for the future of public broadcasting in SA.



Nyanda said: "As we face this dysfunctional board, we will have to look at the Act and dissolve the current board and replace it as soon as possible by an interim board.

"Afterwards, we will start another process, which is to appoint a new and permanent board.

"We are mindful of how the public broadcaster has run its finances down, which need to be attended to as quickly as possible by an interim board," Nyanda, a former army general, now retired, added.

New funding model in the offing?

Nyanda said that a task team comprising members of the treasury and his ministry and other experts will be appointed to interrogate what the SABC can or cannot do at this stage.

He also said that it seems clear that the broadcaster will need help from government, "But at the end of the day we will have to look at another funding model, and my ministry is willing to listen to all suggestions and engage an open debate for a better future of the public broadcaster."

Given the continuous political interference into the SABC's affairs and its alleged mismanagement by a board and executive said to be lacking knowledge of broadcasting dynamics, many observers firmly believe that SA's public broadcasting faces an uncertain future.

Editorial independence is crucial

“The SABC is an important part of the country's media and it is absolutely imperative that it should be publicly accountable and have an (sic) editorial independence, Kate Skinner, spokesperson for ‘Save our SABC’ Coalition, told the audience.

“When public media is not playing its role efficiently, commercial media takes the edge and reinforces its grip on the media scene.”

Once again, Skinner blamed the oversight structures of SABC - Parliament and the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) - for not doing their job properly. She said government is not appointing the people with required skills to the board and ICASA is not playing a pro-active role in checking the deficiencies of SABC in terms of local content.

ICASA needs teeth, new vision

South African Screen Federation (SASFED) chairman Rehad Desai said: “We need a public broadcaster that actively encourages debate and controversy and gets the nation talking, gives space to traditionalists and culturalists and supports the independent producers. ICASA must grow some teeth and start to bite.”

ICASA councillor Robert Nkuna said: “We need a new vision for the public broadcaster in a new context. New SABC channels will have to be submitted to value test. But ICASA can only do what is prescribed by the law - something that is well clarified and spelt out by the legislation.”

Media researcher Libby Lloyd, a former ICASA councillor and former CEO of the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA), said: “Government must review existing policy, including a new funding model, and not abdicate responsibility. We need to know that an increase in public funds leads to increasing values.”

For more:

- Mail & Guardian Online: [Interim SABC board expected soon...](#) The minister of communications seems hopeful that an interim board for the SABC could be in place soon, and he also acknowledged that the government recognised the plight of independent producers who have not been paid by the broadcaster.

ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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