

# Campaign for Open Media <sup>48</sup>

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Sithembele Khala  
General Secretary : MWASA  
By telefax: (011) 337-7273

Dear Sithembele

I sent Mwasu an invitation a few days ago addressed to you to attend the second plenary meeting of the Campaign for Independent Broadcasting (CIB) to be held this Friday at 5pm at the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism at 9 Jubilee Road, Parktown, Johannesburg.

I am writing this letter to you because I am concerned about developments arising out of the first plenary meeting which was drawn to my attention by Cde Mudini Maivha of Mactu during that meeting. He indicated that the issues he was raising was a problem for both Mactu and Mwasu.

He told me that Mwasu had received an invitation from the ANC to attend the meeting and that this created the impression that the CIB was an initiative of the ANC. He said this impression was further strengthened by the fact that the ANC general secretary delivered a formal address at the meeting.

I feel that this impression -- that the CIB is an initiative of the ANC -- is serious and should be addressed.

The Campaign for Open Media was unaware that the ANC had sent an invitation to MWASA to attend the first plenary meeting. I sent Mwasu a faxed invitation on a COM letterhead addressed to you on November 20. I intend asking the ANC to clarify why it sent a separate invitation to Mwasu.

We invited the ANC secretary general to deliver the address because we specifically wanted the ANC to report on what had transpired at the Codesa negotiations in respect of broadcasting issues. As it transpires, very little was achieved at those negotiations in respect of the media. We agreed to a suggestion of the ANC that they could also present their perspective on a campaign to bring about independent control of broadcasting. In his address, Cde Ramaphosa said he believed that media workers should play a leading role in the campaign. He referred to ongoing instances of apartheid at the SABC and the struggle of the workers against it and their desire to work independently and professionally.

At the plenary meeting the delegates discussed whether in fact political parties and organisations should be allowed to be members of the campaign. The meeting decided that they

could be members, but that their status would be equal to all other organisations in the campaign. Although

representatives of <sup>three</sup> ~~two~~ political organisations were present, the ANC and Azapo, they were not elected onto the steering committee. There was a strong feeling that civil society organisations should lead the campaign. This did not exclude the role of political organisations and parties in bilateral and multi-party negotiations in achieving the demands of the campaign, or their leaders playing a role from time to time to generate publicity for the campaign and to represent it on invitation at high-level meetings with the government, the SABC, and others. the SACP

Incidentally, in the meantime, the PAC has indicated its support for the Campaign and has agreed to arrange for either their president or deputy president to be present at a press conference where the launch of the campaign is to be announced. We are hoping that the Democratic Party will also become part of the campaign.

The chairperson of COM, Raymond Louw, is himself concerned that the Campaign for Independent Broadcasting must be seen to be a broad alliance of organisations operating on a broad public interest and democratic agenda, and not as a front for the interests of any particular political organisation or party.

I can give the assurance that the CIB is an independent initiative. It arose out of meetings originally held by organisations involved in educational broadcasting who detected that the SABC was showing serious signs of unilaterally restructuring itself on commercial lines. COM was invited to some of these meetings and was requested to convene the first plenary meeting so that a campaign could be discussed. It was felt that democratic organisations with an interest in public broadcasting had to align their efforts so that the ideal of an independent and accountable public broadcaster would not be lost.

As regards the campaign, we regard the participation of Mwasas as crucial. We would appreciate it if this campaign could be discussed in Mwasas. Obviously, we would also very much like a Mwasas representative to attend the second plenary meeting on Friday. Mwasas is of course welcome to raise any problems or queries it may have at that meeting. That is why they are held -- so that their can be accountability and joint decision making. If it is not possible for you or other head-office officials of Mwasas to attend Friday's meeting, could you perhaps delegate the responsibility to other Mwasas representatives.

I hope that this letter will go some way towards resolving the issues that Cde Mudini raised with me.

Yours sincerely  
Jeanette Xinnie  
Member of the Steering Committee : CIB

*J. B. Munnice*