STATE OF THE MEDIA REPORT 2014

In the Report:

Introduction

Political Context and Key Events

Media Environment

Arrests, threats and harassment of journalists

Access to information/freedom of expression

Print Media

Broadcasting/Telecommunications/ICT

Way Forward in 2015

Conclusion

Media Violations Statistics: 2014

❖ Introduction
Zimbabwe stands at the cross-roads of progression or regression to the pre-2008 hyper-inflationary period given that the year 2014 can safely be dismissed as a write-off despite the government’s spirited pronouncements that its $27 billion economic blueprint, ZIMASSET, would spur the country’s socio-economic growth.

The stark reality of the dim prospects that Zimbabwe faces were perhaps aptly captured by the Speaker of the House of Assembly Jacob Mudenda during a workshop for parliamentarians.

Mudenda warned that Zimbabwe was at the risk of “social convulsions” if promises made by politicians in the run-up to the 2013 elections are not delivered on time, putting the country’s peace and stability under threat. His observations should be viewed against the advent of Zimbabwe’s new constitution back-to-back with President Robert Mugabe and his Zanu PF’s majority victory in the 2013 elections.

President Mugabe’s triumph in the elections marked the death of the coalition government which he blamed as a hindrance to the implementation of his party’s socio-economic development programmes, now outlined under ZIMASSET post the 2013 elections.

Zimbabwe held its landmark elections on the 31st of July 2013 with (President) Robert Mugabe of Zanu PF winning 61% of the presidential vote against (former coalition Prime Minister) Morgan Tsvangirai of the MDC – T’s 34%.

His victory was received with skepticism on whether he would deliver on his election promises and envisaged socio-economic and political reforms in line with the new constitutional dispensation.

Reservations on whether the government would muster the political will to deliver came on the back of President Mugabe’s reappointment of a Cabinet in which he retained the majority of his pre-2008 elections ministers. The Zanu PF leader once described this same line-up as the worst Cabinet ever, thus branding them inept and incompetent.

- **Socio-politico environment.**

Remarks by the Speaker should thus be viewed against the foregoing scenario where attention to reviving the economy on the backdrop of fundamental socio-economic and political reforms was for the duration of 2014 relegated to the back-burner.
Instead of concentrating on reforms to entrench democracy and accountability in order to attract foreign direct investment, the country witnessed unprecedented if not ugly factional fights especially within the rank and file of Zanu PF structures ahead of the party’s elective December 2014 Congress. The infighting resulted in the ouster of Vice President Mujuru and other Zanu PF stalwarts.

The intra-party upheavals and political bickering were not only restricted to Zanu PF, but were also manifest within the opposition ranks which has seen the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) splitting into three distinct formations.

The economy was virtually orphaned in the wake of the political power contestations. More so in the context of the ruling Zanu PF’s intense infighting and purges against those perceived to be fighting in (then) Vice President Joice Mujuru’s camp for strategic succession positioning in the event of President Mugabe who turns 91 in February 2015, vacating office.

Thus despite the existence of ZIMASSET, widely dismissed as a theoretical statement of intentions, the economy continued on its downward spiral forcing the government to revise downwards its economic growth projections.

In November, Finance Minister Patrick Chinamasa revised Zimbabwe’s economic forecasts from 6.1 percent to 3.1 percent while independent economists estimated an economic growth of 1.5 percent in 2014 in a country that is failing to service its $8 billion foreign debt.

There is also the scourge of endemic corruption with Zimbabwe being ranked 156 out of 175 highly corrupt countries according to the 2014 Global Corruption Perception Index released by Transparency International.

Such a poor score is indicative of widespread bribery, lack of punishment for corruption and public institutions that do not respond to citizens’ needs.

While Zanu PF promised to create more than two million jobs in various sectors of the economy, the country’s National Social Security Authority (NSSA), says with an unemployment rate of more than 80 percent, tens of thousands continued to lose jobs with an average of 10 companies closing every month since January 2014.
Companies continued to operate below average slumping to 36 percent from 39 percent amid deteriorating service deliveries, water and electricity shortages.

Chinamasa summed the sad state of affairs during a pre-2015 budget seminar in November 2014 when he said 92 percent of the 2014 budget had been gobbled by recurrent expenditure leaving just 7 percent for crucial capital projects, while wages chewed 81.5 percent of income.

“This clearly is not a development budget. This constrained nature of the budget implies underfunding of … development projects and other social service necessary for economic growth. Such projects include provision of health services, water infrastructure, road rehabilitation and maintenance, power generation, among others,” said Chinamasa.

In his static $4.1 billion 2015 budget, Chinamasa said more than 55 000 jobs had been lost since 2011, while 4 610 companies had closed. He projected a 3.2 percent economic growth but did not state how this would be achieved. His projection, however, is below the SADC average of 5 percent GDP growth, heralding another tough year for the country.

Botswana, Mozambique and Zambia, for instance are experiencing growths of 5 percent and above. During the last five years Zimbabwe had foreign direct investment inflows of $ 1 458 billion compared to Zambia and Mozambique’s $7 billion and $16 billion respectively during 2009 -2013.

The year under review can thus easily be concluded as having been a write-off as the economy and the envisaged reforms were relegated to the backburner at the expense of political expedience characterised by the Zanu PF upheavals ahead of its 2-7 December 2014 Congress.

media environment

As mentioned in the 2013 State of the Media Report, the coming into being of Zimbabwe’s new homegrown Constitution which, among other progressive provisions, now explicitly guarantees the right to media freedom and citizens’ right to access to information, offered immense opportunity for the realignment of the country’s repressive media laws with the new constitutional provisions.

That did not happen during the course of the First Session of the Eighth Parliament of Zimbabwe which officially got underway on 18 September 2013 following Zanu PF’s majority victory in the elections of the same year.
It is therefore easy to discern the lack of political will to undertake the expected media, freedom of expression and access to information legislative reforms to give effect to the same constitutionally guaranteed rights and freedoms.

Telling in that regard is the fact that when President Robert Mugabe yet again officially opened the Second Session of the Eighth Parliament on 28 October 2014, he unveiled 15 Bills that would be tabled during the session for alignment with the new constitution.

However, of the 15, none relate or arise from the need to foster media freedom, freedom of expression and access to information by amending or repealing the afore-mentioned laws. The closest there has been to the expected reforms are statements that AIPPA, is among the 400-plus laws that are being subjected to scrutiny for realignment by an inter-ministerial committee.

Suffice to say there is no urgency in aligning the country’s legislative framework with the supreme charter save for official rhetoric laden with expressions of intent and promises of delivery.

Resultantly, laws that were crafted under the old constitutional dispensation continue to be implemented corroding the democratic principles and human rights safeguards contained in the new constitution. These include explicit guarantees for media freedom, promotion and protection of freedom of expression as well as access to information.

The old legislative framework remains in place posing threats to the enjoyment of the very same rights the new constitution seeks to promote and protect.

This legislative disjuncture has been underscored by the arrests and harassment of journalists during the course of 2014 under the country’s harsh media laws. These include the arrest of Daily News Editor Stanley Gama and reporter Fungai Kwaramba under criminal defamation laws; the conviction of provincial community newspaper publisher James Muonwa under AIPPA in April 2014; the raiding of community radio initiatives, Radio Dialogue and Radio Kwelaz in April and June 2014 respectively, under suspicions they were in violation of the Broadcasting Services Act.
In addition, law enforcement agents used old laws to bar marches and gatherings by media practitioners, civil society organisations and members of the public. Several citizens have also fallen foul of existing laws while exercising their right to freedom of expression through online platforms. The old media regulatory framework continues to be used to license aspiring media owners, including private broadcasters.

It is against this reality that the statement by the Minister of Media, Information and Broadcasting Services Professor Jonathan Moyo on 3 July 2014 that the new Constitution takes precedence over other pieces of legislation in regulating the media space - though sending a positive message - has caused more confusion and exposes seeming disharmony within government and state institutions in interpreting and implementing provisions of the new constitution. (Moyo was addressing the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Media, Information and Broadcasting Services in Harare).

Earlier, while addressing a civil society meeting on the Constitution hosted by the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition in June 2014, Deputy Justice Minister Fortune Chasi, appeared to defend the continued use of old laws arguing this was provided for in the new constitution. He cited Schedule Six Paragraph 10 of the new constitution.

It states: *Subject to this Schedule, all existing laws continue in force but must be construed in conformity with this Constitution.*

Although Moyo insisted during the same parliamentary address that the problem is not with the law but practice, it is MISA-Zimbabwe’s considered view that as long as there is no urgent holistic review of the legislative framework in accordance with the new constitution, the implementation of the constitution will remain mired in confusion and subject to individual interpretation of the law.

This creates legislative chaos whereby those holding public office including law enforcement agents can easily resort to the old constitutional dispensation and use myriad instruments to curtail citizens’ liberties, including their right to freedom of expression, when called to account or when threatened by media and public scrutiny.

It is MISA-Zimbabwe’s hope that the government-sanctioned Information and Media Panel of Inquiry (IMPI)’s findings will culminate in progressive recommendations in addressing the legislative discord in the
exercise of freedom of expression and that in turn, government urgently expedites the ongoing process of aligning the country’s media laws with the constitution.

It is only through an unambiguous and precise legislative framework that Zimbabweans can fully realise their constitutionally guaranteed rights to freedom of expression, privacy of their communication, access to information and media freedom.

❖ Arrests, threats and harassment of journalists

As noted in our 2013 report and commendably so, there was marked reduction in the number of cases involving media violations with a total of 22 cases compared to the 28 cases reported in 2013. This is indeed a positive trend by Zimbabwean standards when viewed against the 80 alerts issued in 2009 pertaining to media violations which then dropped to a total of 27 in 2010, 28 in 2011, with a similar number recorded in 2012.

While this reduction is commendable, the nature of the violations recorded in 2014 is cause for great concern in that some of the cases involve the assault of journalists on duty by security personnel. What is even more aggravating are the threats issued against journalists by ruling Zanu PF and senior government officials.

Anjela Jimu, a photographer with the Zimbabwe Mail, on 18 August 2014 sustained a swollen arm after being assaulted by the police while covering a demonstration in Harare by opposition MDC-T youths. In a similar incident, Privilege Musvanhiri, an online editor with the same paper, on 19 September 2014, sustained bruises in the back after he was assaulted and arrested by members of the Harare Municipal Police while taking pictures of clashes between council workers and commuter omnibus operators.

Justin Mutenda, a photographer with The Herald, was on 16 October stripped naked by a security officer at Harare International Airport while covering the departure of the national cricket team for Bangladesh. On 22 October 2014, Tapiwa Zivira an online reporter with NewsDay, was assaulted and detained for four hours by police in Harare while recording video footage of a police blitz against touts operating in the central business district.
In Masvingo on 22 October 2014, freelance journalist Wilson Maphosa, was arrested by police while taking pictures of houses that had allegedly been burnt by the police and charged with criminal nuisance in terms of Section 46 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act.

The afore-mentioned cases are a serious indictment on the police’s wanton acts of impunity and disregard of the constitutionally guaranteed right to media freedom. None of the culprits involved in the assault of the journalists in question had been brought to book at the time of the writing of this report as happens in most cases involving security agents.

These violations cannot be taken lightly when viewed against threats by Media, Information and Broadcasting Services Secretary George Charamba on 8 October 2014. Charamba was reported on ZTV warning the media that the government could resort to administering “unpalatable instruments” to rein in media deemed to be unprofessional.

Even more ominous was the First Lady Grace Mugabe’s veiled threats against journalists working for the privately owned Newsday and Daily News during her ‘Meet the People’ rallies following her entry into politics.

While the media is not immune to criticism, the First Lady’s ranting and ravings particularly against journalists working for the Daily News at a Zanu PF rally in Marondera on 17 October 2014, was indeed frightening as experienced and recounted by the affected journalist.

Daily News journalist Fungai Kwaramba was among the posse of journalists at Rudhaka Stadium in Marondera when the First Lady let rip her venom against journalists working for the publication demanding that they identify themselves.

According to media reports, the atmosphere at Rudhaka was highly charged given the enmity among supporters of the different factions within Zanu PF who could easily have taken the law into their own hands. One can only shudder as to that which could have befallen the journalist if he had stood up and identified himself among the sea of the highly agitated party supporters as demanded by the First Lady.
Earlier in the Midlands capital of Gweru, she spewed similarly ominous threats when she reportedly said she prayed for the closure of the *Daily News* and *Newsday* for writing untruthfully about her and the First Family.

eddar to information/freedom of expression

The continued existence of restrictive laws such as AIPPA, Criminal Defamation, Public Order and Security Act (POSA), Interception of Communications Act and the Entertainment Controls Act, has a serious bearing on citizens’ full enjoyment of the right to freedom of expression and access to information.

This is despite rulings against criminal defamation made by the Supreme Court in 2013 and 2014 in terms of the old Constitution as well as assertions by the Minister of Media, Information and Broadcasting Services, Professor Jonathan Moyo, that criminal defamation should be repealed.

The Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, retains sections that hinder access to and free flow of information which is critical to citizens making informed choices as well as holding accountable the Executive and any other public institutions for that matter.

These are:

- section 95 which provides for the offence of criminal insult.
- section 31 which provides for the offence of publishing or communicating false statements prejudicial to the State.
- section 33 which deals with the offence of undermining authority of or insulting the President.

This has resulted in several citizens being arrested and charged under this law especially in terms of Section 33 which deals with the offence of undermining the authority of or insulting the President.

The fact that Zimbabwe is still to come up with a democratic access to information law as demanded by the new constitution is a serious indictment on the government’s commitment to entrenching democratic principles and values.

This development should be viewed against the passing of an access to information bill by the Mozambican parliament on 26 November 2014. The Mozambican bill seeks to create greater transparency and generate public participation in Mozambique.
The Bill imposes a duty on public and some private bodies to “make available information of public interest in their power, publishing it through legally permitted channels, which can make it increasingly accessible to citizens”. The only requirement on people requesting information is that they identify themselves; they will not need to explain what they want to do with the information. Requested information must be provided within 21 days.

Meanwhile, Section 62 (4) of the Zimbabwean Constitution which is still to be fulfilled provides as follows:

Legislation must be enacted to give effect to this right (access to information), but may restrict access to information in the interests of defence, public security or professional confidentiality, to the extent that the restriction is fair, reasonable, necessary and justifiable in a democratic society based on openness, justice, human dignity, equality and freedom.

The media plays a fundamental role in accessing information which is vital to the day-to-day functioning of a democracy and the socio-economic wellbeing of citizens. Citizens should thus be empowered through enabling legislation to request and receive information from public and private bodies.

Meanwhile, the government on 13 June 2014 repealed Statutory Instrument 142/2013 of the Postal and Telecommunications (Subscriber Registration) regulations following an adverse report by the Parliamentary Legal Committee (PLC).

The PLC passed the adverse report in March 2014 after observing that the regulations were unconstitutional as they allowed state security agents to access subscribers’ personal data without a court search warrant.

The new regulations S.I.95 of 2014 bar the release of subscriber information to law enforcement agents without a court warrant.

The repealed regulations previously allowed POTRAZ to give information in its central database to a law enforcement agent only if it was requested in writing by an officer of or above the rank of Assistant Commissioner of Police or an equivalent rank in another force.

In practice this has not been so as witnessed by the number of arrests of ordinary Zimbabwean citizens and media professionals relating to their use of the internet and social media platforms in Zimbabwe.
The arrests have raised pertinent questions relating to issues of internet freedom, security and citizen journalism, social media and the law. With the precedent cases of Vikazi Mavhudzi in 2011 over a post made on former Prime Minister, Morgan Tsvangirai’s Facebook page, several arrests were made.

Among these are the arrests of Harare tailor, Madzibaba Chacha, whose picture in a Zimbabwe Republic Police uniform went viral on Whatsapp and the release of names of individuals ‘connected’ to the muckraking online character Baba Jukwa case, who include among others, Sunday Mail Editor Edmund Kudzayi and University of Zimbabwe student Romeo Musemburi.

MISA-Zimbabwe recognises the internet and social media as a democratic and ideal space for individuals to freely express themselves owing to the continued control of the mainstream media; a position acknowledged by the United Nations in a declaration of Internet freedom as a basic right in 2012.

The authorities should therefore speedily repeal AIPPA and all pieces of legislation that criminalise freedom of expression; curtail access to information and choke the media from freely fulfilling its fundamental watchdog role.

This is of imperative urgency given that Zimbabwe is a state party to Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights and its Declaration on the Principles of Freedom of Expression in Africa and has no excuse whatsoever in continuing to cling to these repressive and anachronistic laws.

These laws serve to instil fear and self-censorship among journalists and the generality of citizens thereby curbing free flow of information and public accountability and transparency.

**Print media**

While Zimbabwe now boasts a plethora of print media houses, the long-term viability of newspaper companies is threatened due to the underperforming economy which is the source for advertising revenue.

The largest newspaper stable, the state-controlled Zimpapers, publishers of The Herald, Sunday Mail, Chronicle, Manica Post, Sunday News, H-Metro, B-Metro and StarFM, among others, recorded a $1,417 million loss after tax in the half-year ended June 30 2014 from a positive out turn of $358 000 the previous year as revenue tumbled due to high finance costs and a worsening economic environment.

Zimpapers operates 12 publications, a commercial printing press, a radio station and two digital platforms.
Revenue declined by six percent to $21 million in the prior year while gross profit also declined to $16.2 million from $16.5 million.

Chairman Charles Utete said the company's current liabilities stand at $21.7 million, exceeding its current assets by $8.1 million because of internal and external obligations which are difficult to liquidate.

This scenario paints a gloomy picture on the future viability and sustainability of newspaper companies with several of them struggling to break even resulting in downsizing of staff and late payments of salaries.

The small privately owned weekly newspapers that fill the gap at provincial community levels in terms of citizens' right to access to information are literally struggling with the majority now publishing fortnightly instead of weekly.

Generally, the Zimbabwean journalist is now a depressed lot due to slashed salaries, late payments and poor working conditions. With the gloomy economic outlook for 2015 in the wake of company closures, it is feared some of the smaller papers might be forced to close shop.

The situation is particularly dire for the smaller publications as advertisers turn to the national circulating giants and the new online platforms. This negative outlook for 2015 is chilling to contemplate given that where there is limited plurality and diversity of information platforms, the state often controls the public sphere by using the dominant media it controls to set the agenda and suffocates citizens with one-sided narratives on matters affecting them.

The low morale among journalists compounded by the state's continued stranglehold on Zimpapers and Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), contributed immensely to the continued decline in professional journalism in Zimbabwe.

The long and short of this situation which requires serious attention, is that journalism in Zimbabwe is on the precipice as epitomised by partisan reportage along party political affiliations, in blatant disregard of the codes and ethics of the profession.

Quality of information is thus compromised thereby short-changing readers and Zimbabwean citizens when it comes to reliability of information upon which they can make informed decisions on issues that affect their daily lives.
Zimbabwean newspapers therefore need to revisit their business sustainability models for them to survive the economic hardships at a time when the majority of companies are operating on shoe-string budgets.

**Broadcasting/Telecommunications/ICTs**

Section 61 of the Constitution which guarantees freedom of expression and freedom of the media, subsection 3 (b), states that broadcasting and other electronic media of communication should be independent of control by government or by political or commercial interests. It further stipulates under sub-section 4 that all state-owned media of communications must:

a) be free to determine independently the editorial content of their broadcasts or other communications
b) be impartial and
c) afford fair opportunity for the presentation of divergent views and dissenting opinions.

Despite the foregoing constitutional provisions, the government continued with its stranglehold on ZBC notwithstanding assurances by the Minister of Media, Information and Broadcasting Services that the government would comply with the afore-mentioned constitutional provisions.

While the minister proceeded to appoint a new ZBC board of governors, these appointments were not made in the context of the new constitutional dispensation and its transformation into a truly independent broadcaster as stipulated in key instruments such as the African Charter on Broadcasting. This instrument stipulates:

*All state and government controlled broadcasters should be transformed into public service broadcasters that are accountable to all strata of people as represented by an independent board…..(and) should be governed by bodies that are protected against interference.*

The Declaration of Principles of Freedom of Expression in Africa also underscores how vital the independence of a public broadcaster is, noting in its part VI:

*State and government controlled broadcasters should be transformed into public service broadcasters, accountable to the public through the legislature rather than government, in accordance with the following*
principles; (that) Public broadcasters should be governed by a board which is protected against interference, particularly of a political or economic nature.

It is MISA-Zimbabwe’s conviction that the full recovery and success of the bankrupt ZBC hinges on the existence of a board that is truly independent from all influences and which is accountable to the public as mandated by the above-mentioned instruments. Further, it is our considered view that its success is also dependent on its ability to determine editorial content independently as mandated by 61 (4) (a) of the constitution.

The government should therefore revisit the ZBC Commercialisation Act as well as all other applicable laws such as the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA), governing the appointment of its board, its conditions of service as well as policies regarding editorial content and general functions of ZBC.

As stated in our 2013 report, the appointment of an independent ZBC board answerable to Parliament is now of imperative urgency given the new constitutional dispensation as it will go a long in securing the editorial and programming independence of ZBC through a binding Editorial Charter to foster accountability on its envisaged public service mandate.

Community radio stations

Zimbabwe is still to license community radio stations, 13 odd years after the enactment of BSA which provides for community radios. The issue of when applications will be called for continued to be bogged down by excuses such as lack of resources for the requisite infrastructure and need to come up with a binding definition of what constitutes a community.

On a positive note though, the government conducted 12 public hearings into applications for provincial commercial radio stations. Initially, the call for applications was for 25 provincial radio stations resulting in the shortlisting of 18 and the subsequent 12 public hearings after six applicants pulled out.

digitisation

Zimbabwe missed SADC 2013 deadline and is likely to miss the International Telecommunications Union’s 2015 deadline despite assertions by the government that digital broadcasting has the potential to support 80 television services.

Currently ZBC (television), is not accessible in some parts of the country and in those parts where there is signal, the reception is extremely poor. However, radio transmission had reportedly increased to 80
percent in 2013 following a Transmedia co-franchise with Skynet over satellite services that allowed for transmission expansion nationwide.

The equipment used in radio stations owned by the ZBC, due to under-capitalisation, is antiquated and needs replacing with digital studios. Former Information Minister Webster Shamu told Parliament in 2009 that ZBC needed approximately $70 million to replace its obsolete equipment.

He said all the transmitters in the country had outlived their lifespan by more than 25 years. The current minister reiterated in 2014 that ZBC needs an overhaul of its existing equipment and transmitters if digital migration is to be successful.

Mobile penetration/telecommunications

Despite having an “over-subscribed” mobile penetration rate of 106%, the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ), estimates that only 60% of Zimbabweans are actually on mobile device or have multiple-active mobile SIM cards (Unique subscriber penetration).

This was revealed by a POTRAZ official responding to a question at the recently held Enterprise Office Communication Summit in Harare in November. The POTRAZ official, Shingirai Marufu, said although Zimbabwe’s mobile penetration has reached 106%, the actual head-count of people in possession of SIM cards is only 60% of the population, which translates to 8.4 million people.

This obviously raises questions regarding mobile penetration and some key decisions that may have been made due to misplaced assumptions. For instance, the Minister of Finance, Patrick Chinamasa, imposed a 25% duty tariff on mobile devices and other IT gadgets because Zimbabwe had achieved over 100% mobile penetration, and that the previous duty free tariff on mobile devices had thus “achieved its purpose”.

Following recent criticisms that most African markets count SIM cards instead of unique subscribers, The African Wireless Communications Yearbook, reports that the GSMA recently cut penetration statistics on Africa from over 100% to 45%. Research ICT Africa (RIA), says South Africa reported a peak penetration of 115%, but the actual figure is 85%.
As for Zimbabwe this can be attributed to poor service and pricing hence consumers feel the need to own multiple SIM cards. Consumers cannot rely on one carrier for quality service.

Meanwhile, internet penetration is now 47%. The total number of internet subscriptions in the country as at the end of June 2014 was 6.1 million, up from 5.6 million in March this year. - See more at: http://www.techzim.co.zw/2014/10/zimbabwes-internet-penetration-almost-50-99-mobile/#sthash.du8sCbfC.dpuf

Way forward in 2015

- Zimbabwe should move swiftly in aligning its media laws, policy and regulatory frameworks with the new constitutional dispensation and the regional and international instruments that it is a state party or signatory to.
- The government should deal with perpetrators of media violations and ensure the greatest safety and security of journalists conducting their lawful professional duties.
- On the other hand, professionalisation of the media industry should address issues of knowledge, skills and ethics in the media industry by media practitioners, managers and owners to foster media accountability to the public.
- Publishers and media professional bodies such as the Zimbabwe Union of Journalist (ZUJ) should agree on a framework that addresses the working conditions of journalists and other media workers in general.
- The ZBC Commercialisation Act should equally be repealed and replaced with a new act that secures its governance, managerial and editorial independence as provided for under the new constitution.
- Ensure citizen participation in the transparent and democratic appointment process for the ZBC board, while securing and guaranteeing its independence and accountability in carrying out its public service mandate.
- In equal vein, the Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust should be reconstituted to cushion Zimpapers from political interference.
Facilitate the accessibility of information to the public and broadcasting stakeholders by all relevant authorities through regular updates on Zimbabwe’s digital migration plans and developments.

Urgently converge the broadcasting and telecommunications sector and establish an independent and converged regulatory body through a transparent process.

Urgently formulate a clear policy and regulatory framework for community broadcasting which will include a representative and all-encompassing definition of a community for purposes of facilitating the application process and licensing of community broadcasters.

Prioritise licensing of genuinely independent aspiring broadcasters and ensure government functionaries and agencies do not have an unfair advantage in competing for the limited frequencies.

Policy makers should be mindful of the importance of social media, and its added advantage in ensuring easier access to the citizenry, and their accountability. They must ensure that the platform remains ‘relatively’ free and accessible to the ‘marginalised’ communities.

Conclusion

Compliance with the new constitutional dispensation will be the first major step towards socio-economic and political reforms that will not only attract desperately need foreign direct investment, but also assist in entrenching transparency and accountability.

End

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