

# Africa must unite, share for 2010

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Communicators from all corners of Africa should forge partnerships, strive to speak with one integrated and coherent voice, and must be acquainted with decisions of the continent's leadership in order to have enough tools to engage their various sectors in preparations for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, Dr Makhenkesi Stofile, the South African minister of sport and recreation, said yesterday, Wednesday, 15 August 2007, at the opening of the 2010 National Communication Partnership Conference at Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg.

"Africa's time has indeed come. The entire continent must work together and consolidate African solidarity around this project, the African showpiece," Dr Stofile said.

"This conference kick-starts the process of developing a communication strategy on the 2010 FIFA World Cup and the kind of legacy it will deliver to SA and Africa."

## Critics

But, as the preparations for the world's biggest soccer feast get into full swing, some critics – branded as Afro-pessimists – still believe that SA, and Africa in particular, is not 'fit enough' to stage the event of such magnitude, citing security, logistics and health reasons.

However, Dr Stofile told delegates that Afro-pessimism must be banished and its myth that Africa is a dark continent ravaged by wars and diseases has to be dealt with once for all. He urged all Africans to unite and share what he called 'the broader responsibility that transcends the borders of the African continent'.

Likewise, the president of African Union of Broadcasters, Dr Ben Egbuna, of Nigeria, said: "Regardless of our political complexion and national ideology, preparation for this tournament has to be an 'everybody's' undertaking. Let's foster and strengthen the inter-country competitive spirit and build synergy among the various media organisations on the continent.

"It is a challenge for Africa and in particular African media to use this opportunity to counter the wrong perceptions of Africa and project the positive image and values of the continent," Dr Egbuna added.

## More than 300 delegates

More than 300 delegates – marketers, tourism practitioners, communicators and other interested stakeholders – from various African countries are currently attending the 'Africa's time has come' conference to discuss how best to take

advantage of the 2010 world cup communication opportunity to build African solidarity and to foster a climate that contributes to African growth and development.

Yvonne Johnston, CEO of the International Marketing Council (IMC) of SA, said: "This is our golden moment. Germany grabbed the opportunity and did well. We will be crazy if we don't do the same. But first, communicators need to engage and exchange ideas and concrete suggestions on how to define our image and reputation in the world – like work towards changing perceptions of the continent, tell successful stories and change narratives."

Johnston urged communicators to act professionally and be consistent in the messaging process – something she believes leads to greater marketing impact and cost efficiencies through economies of scale.

## **Voluntary association**

The 2010 National Communication Partnership is a voluntary association of public and private sector that currently comprises more than 250 members across the many creative and communication disciplines, its chairperson Nkenke Kekana said.

Government Communications Information System (GCIS) CEO Themba Maseko, Local Organising Committee (LOC) CEO Dr Danny Jordan and Southern Africa Broadcasting Association secretary-general Arlindo Lopes were also among the various dignitaries that attended the conference's opening day.

The gathering ends today, Thursday, with a media tour organised for journalists to see first-hand the progress and developments underway in the city of Johannesburg as part of SA's preparations of the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

Stops include Orlando Stadium and surrounding legacy and regeneration projects.

## **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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