

SADC Media Awards 2010 launched

 Bylssa Sikiti da Silva

5 Feb 2010

Collins Chabane, minister in the presidency in charge of performance monitoring and evaluation, and government spokesperson Themba Maseko last night, Thursday, 4 February 2010, made an impassioned plea to South African journalists to participate in the SADC Media Awards competition, saying it promotes regional integration and togetherness through excellent journalism.



The 2010 competition, launched at the Atlas Studios in Johannesburg, will reward successful journalists working in the field of print, TV, radio, online and photo journalism.

“[The] SADC initiative is to bring together media people in the region, encourage regional integration not only at [a] political level but also at [a] society level, and ensure that people in the region begin to know each other,” Chabane said.

Prospective entrants who are SADC nationals have until 31 March 2010 to submit their entries, which must be accompanied by proof of their nationality, to the National Adjudication Committee in their respective countries.

Media called upon to enter

The committee comprises academics, editors, journalists, TV, video and photography experts. *Sowetan* editor Fikile-Notsikelelo Moya is the committee's chairperson and Amina Frense is his deputy.

The organisers said entries for the competition must be related to issues and activities promoting regional integration in the SADC region. Each category carries a prize cash of US\$2000 (about R15 000) and a certificate signed by the SADC chairperson. The award ceremony will this year take place in Malawi.

“We are calling on SA media to massively participate in this project because it is important in terms of encouraging the youth to take up media as a profession, enhancing regional integration and also rewarding good journalism,” Maseko said.

However, it is believed that few SA journalists participate in this competition primarily due to a number of lucrative media competitions taking place in the country. Maseko, whose organisation - Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) - is in charge of marketing the awards to SA media, said he will sit down with SA media groups to lobby for a massive participation in the competition.

Why enter - when journalists are targeted?

A source said last night: "Why would I bother to enter this competition? CNN, Vodacom, Mondi Shanduka for instance organise good awards. This one does not really motivate me in any way.

"The other big issue is media freedom. The fact that many SADC governments detain, threaten, torture or kill journalists makes me question the very existence and purpose of these awards."

But the minister said the lack of media freedom in certain countries should not be an excuse for journalists not to travel there and report objectively.

"When they say media is a watchdog, it is indeed so. Society depends on media to tell them what is happening out there and tell it in a balanced way. It is a journalist's task to go out there and tell it as it is. Even those who are embedded should now break free from those chains and begin to tell the story in a balanced way," he said.

SADC secretariat said entries should have been published or broadcast between January and December 2009 by a registered or authorised media house or agency, or carried on a website of a registered media house in a SADC member state.

Entries forms should be collected at GCIS offices in Pretoria or be downloaded from www.gcis.gov.za and dropped at the *Sowetan's* offices in Rosebank.

For more information, email Takalani J. Mashamba (GCIS) at , or contact the SADC national media coordinator in each member state.

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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