

O'Neil's 'extended oversight': SABC board sets record straight

 Bylssa Sikiti da Silva

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The SABC board is upset and disappointed by what it calls annihilating and baseless accusations made by the president of trade union BEMAWU regarding Clare O'Neil, a board member who has recently been asked to provide "extended oversight" on all of the corporation's sales and marketing activities.



The inaccurate reports and potentially libellous statements - as the board put it - were published yesterday, Tuesday, 9 March 2010, on Bizcommunity.com and contained the union's objections regarding O'Neil's 'new role'.

Board chairperson Dr Ben Ngubane told Bizcommunity.com last night, "I want to state clearly that everything that was said in that article about Clare is inaccurate and false and therefore not based on facts. Clare is an ordinary member of the board and has no intention of joining the SABC as a full-time employee.

"All board members have some sort of expertise they bring in the corporation and in this case Clare has a vast knowledge in sales - that is why we asked her to provide an extended oversight on sales as we could have asked anybody to do so in other fields."

'No new role or new position'

O'Neil's so-called new 'role' and 'position' caused panic and raised suspicions among union members, prompting the organisation to demand that the SABC explain, among others, if O'Neil will get some sort of monthly financial reward or become a 'nine-to-five' senior manager through the back door.

However, Dr Ngubane, a former cabinet minister, said, "There is no such thing as new role or new position. It is just a normal process whereby an ordinary board member is asked to provide an extra-fiduciary duty and advise the CEO. Every now and then, board members are allowed to do that.

"She will not get paid for that because it is not a paying job. She will not come to the office on a full-time basis or interact

with staff or get involved in any of these activities, let alone be given a lucrative job as many people put it.”

Yesterday afternoon, O'Neil sent an email to Bizcommunity.com, expressing her disappointment about the accusations, calling the article "not only materially damaging to [her] personally but to the entire board".

"We're doing our duty"

Furthermore, Dr Ngubane said the board is an accounting authority of the SABC, and therefore it has to ensure that revenue - emanating from sales, among others - is looked after because it forms a crucial part of the corporation's survival.

Last night, a source confirmed to Bizcommunity that O'Neil does attend the board's finance subcommittee meetings where she is allowed to ask more questions on the state of finances, but she has never sat with the sales team or engaged them on any matter.

An SABC board member gets a monthly retainer of R8000.

“As good citizens, we are only doing it to fulfil our duty of serving the public. It is our fiduciary duty to provide an efficient oversight,” Dr Ngubane said, adding that O'Neil has never made advertising deals with anyone.

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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