



**SPEECH BY THE HONOURABLE FAITH MUTHAMBI,
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**Programme Director,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important panel discussion. Your topic on “***Country reputation - who's in charge of communications, identity and trust?***” is close to our heart in South Africa. I am pleased to share with you our experience and best practices in this area.

We view our country's reputation as central to our attractiveness as an investment and tourist destination. It allows us to differentiate ourselves in a highly competitive global community. It allows for a coherent and consistent representation of who we are as a nation. We are able to clearly articulate what we stand for as a country. It allows us to stand out, and stand tall!

A strong country brand assists us in meeting our domestic priorities. The enhanced recognition of South Africa means we can welcome more corporate investments, more world-class events and more visitors from every corner of the globe.

This will lead to more economic prosperity. There will be higher levels of employment and a better standard of living. In turn, the latter undoubtedly brings more social cohesion and mobility, more aspiration and optimism.

Our success in building our brand is through open and effective communication both at a local and international level. What we communicate and how we communicate goes a long way towards building and sustaining trust.

At home we use the power of communication to serve our communities by informing, educating and providing open access to information. Ours is a developmental agenda and as such our communication encourages people to participate in developing our country and growing our economy.

We are guided by the National Development Plan which envisages an active citizenry that participates in the socio-economic life of the country and are more conscious of the things they have in common than their differences.

Programme Director,

It was not so long ago that the freedom to communicate with South Africans and the world at large was significantly curtailed by the apartheid regime. The communication apparatus of the apartheid state misled people and led to a breakdown in trust.

Our society at the time was characterised by a culture of secrecy, disinformation and restrictions on press freedom. Its laws ensured that the majority of South Africans remained disadvantaged.

Our reputation at home and internationally was in tatters. The birth of our democracy in 1994 changed all this. It ushered in an era where for the first time government was fully accountable to the public.

Freedom of expression became an integral part of our new democratic society. The free and open flow of communication was central in our goal of achieving the vision of a non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society.

Our historic march forward has brought with it a sea of change. The communication landscape began to transform. The manner in which we began to communicate significantly impacted how our country was viewed by all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This important work of elevating our country's image at home and abroad falls under the Ministry of Communications which I lead. The Ministry is responsible for the overarching communication policy and strategy of the country, information dissemination and publicity, as well as the country branding.

When the Ministry was established a few years ago we moved to turn it into a communication and information powerhouse. We aligned the entities that reported to it to create a unique composition that covers all aspects of the communication space and works to advance our reputation.

The entities include:

1. The Department of Communications – to oversee the policy for promoting socio-economic development and investment through broadcasting, new media, print media and other new technologies.
2. The Government Communication and Information System or GCIS – responsible for implementation, coordination and leadership in government communication. It influences an effective government communication system, drives coherent government messaging and proactively communicates with the public.

3. The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa or ICASA – an independent regulatory body for the telecommunications and broadcasting sector, working in public interest.
4. The South African Broadcasting Corporation or SABC – a public service broadcaster mandated to inform all South Africans, with a strong radio and television presence nationally, the voice for millions of South Africans.

Given its history as an apartheid mouthpiece prior to 1994, SABC has placed trust at the centre of its relationship with audiences. It continually strives to be the most credible and diverse national media broadcaster. Communication and more specifically public service media must be transparent and work towards the common good. The content SABC generates does more than just entertain. It must inform and educate the public and adhere to the highest standards of moral integrity.

5. The Media Development and Diversity Agency or MDDA – a partnership between the South African Government and major print and broadcasting companies to assist in, among other duties, developing community and small commercial media in South Africa.

An important area of focus for the MDDA is the development of a community radio. We see the community radio as integral to making our democracy work and as a conduit for continuous dialogue on a range of pressing issues; such as safety, health, education, employment and rural development.

6. The Film and Publications Board – a regulatory organ for the local media environment through classification of content. It maintains relevance to the values and norms of the South African society through balancing the right to freedom of expression with an obligation to protect children from exposure to potentially disturbing, harmful and inappropriate material.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The final entity that is part of our communications – Brand South Africa! In 1994 our nation was for the first time exposed to the wider world after the apartheid had turned it into a pariah state.

Relations with many countries were fragile at best and economic cooperation – limited, as a result of sanctions. After 1994, the democratic government's foreign policy approach was characterised by co-operation, collaboration and building of partnerships.

South Africa is now a respected member of the international community and our international relations are stronger than ever before. We understand that our own advancement is linked to that of the rest of the continent and the globe.

To market and profile South Africa to the rest of the world, the government established Brand South Africa under the umbrella of the Ministry of Communications. It is South Africa's official marketing agency.

The team at Brand South Africa is responsible for building and managing the country's domestic and international reputation. It uses the country's contrasts and diversity in the old and new, traditional and progressive, local and global, urban and rural reality, as well as in art and commerce, as our national proposition.

It is these intriguing contradictions that make us such a unique and vibrant nation – a nation where anything seems possible and achievable. To visitors and investors, the brand opens doors to a place that promises a life-changing and profitable experience.

Through its work, Brand South Africa creates a positive and unified image of South Africa – one that helps to build pride, promotes investment and tourism, and helps new enterprises and job creation. Brand South Africa ensures that the diverse interests and stakeholders that make our country great are reflected adequately.

It has the mammoth task to market South Africa to every facet of the globe. It cannot however do this on its own. We therefore foster partnerships and collaborate so that we are able to get the good story of South Africa to everyone.

Its flagship programme Global South Africans creates ambassadors for the nation brand. The programme allows South Africans who live outside the borders of our country to partner with Brand South Africa in promoting the country.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Communication often requires the necessary political support. In understanding this important factor an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Information and Publicity was established by our President.

My Ministry enforces communication through the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Information and Publicity. This elevates communication from a supporting role to one that drives and coordinates communication.

The IMC is responsible for championing and coordinating the work of the Government with regards to communicating programmes to the nation. It oversees the branding and marketing of our country to South Africans and to the world.

It ensures, among its other duties, that the National Communication Strategy directs the work of all government communications. There is a sustained narrative through a dedicated stream of information.

There is a concerted effort to build our credibility and confidence both internally – amongst public servants, and externally – with the public, investors, corporations and civil society.

Our reach and influence is enhanced by contributions by Brand South Africa, by the South African Tourism and by Proudly South African, which are well placed to provide an all-encompassing picture of the country.

In conclusion,

The reputation of our country is safely guarded. It is managed at the highest level. We live by the values that define our nation. We remain transparent and accountable. We ensure this is reflected in our communication. In doing so we strengthen the reputation of our country to become more competitive. I look forward to our further engagement in these discussions.

Thank You.

Faith Muthambi