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## Opening Remarks SANEF Chairperson Ms Nwabisa Makunga

Ladies and gentlemen, Good Morning

It is such a privilege to be here to open the second Indigenous Languages and Media Seminar.

I would like to acknowledge the leadership of SANEF that is here,

Veterans, academics, and colleagues across the industry.

I would like to welcome all our partners, in particular our partners, the United Nations South Africa and the Pan South African Language Board.

For your incredible support in ensuring that the vision of this organisation to promote and preserve our African languages - we are truly indebted.

Colleagues, last year our inaugural seminar not only proved to be a success, but it was also a constructive platform to engage on the role of the Media in promoting and preserving Indigenous languages.

Importantly, it highlighted the work we all have to do to achieve this goal and to create a truly inclusive society.

There is no greater time to recognise, develop and invest in nurturing of our Indigenous languages than this.

Our 30th year of our democracy provides us with an opportunity to truly reflect on the journey we have travelled and importantly, to critic our own commitment to creating an inclusive society.

Language remains a significant metric with which we must measure this commitment.

As the South African National Editors Forum, we recognise that public interest media must play a crucial role in the preservation of our languages.

Universal access to information is about the accessibility of platforms that deliver credible information as well as, equally, the language in which such information is delivered.

All of us agree here that the media environment is a contested and fast evolving space.

It demands that we make necessary interventions to sustain journalism as a public good in order to promote a transparent and accountable society.

These interventions are mostly technological in nature.

They focus on the sustainability of journalism through systemic innovation.

We also believe that these interventions must also be about centering our languages as an integral part of sustaining public interest journalism in SA.

This is a principle we are committed to as an industry body and one which we are prepared to champion as a generational mandate.

Colleagues, allow me to highlight just a few initiatives that demonstrate this commitment.

Many of you may recall that Prof Salawu addressed the inaugural Indigenous Languages seminar last year.

In that gathering it became evident that there was a skills gap in the practice of journalism in African languages.

This is both in text and broadcast media.

Since then, Prof Salawu has worked with SANEF to explore the possibility of designing master classes or a short course to help address the challenge.

Colleagues I am pleased to announce that last month, the North West University Senate has approved an academic programme to provide this training to journalists.

The Journalism school is currently working with SANEF's Education and Training subcommittee to develop the course materials.

The plan is to launch the programme early next year.

I think all colleagues who are working hard to deliver this project deserve a round of applause.

Colleagues, you would have heard us talk about establishing a Journalism Sustainability Fund which we are working hard to get off the ground.

Part of the mandate of the Fund has been to promote the sustainability of community media organisations with a view to promote diversity and universal access in the media landscape.

We do this recognising that the pressures faced by media organisations and practitioners in larger platforms, to deliver quality journalism are often multiplied in the Community media landscape.

It is for this reason that SANEF has been working with MED8 MEDIA on a pilot project to migrate some print community media platforms to digital platforms and to explore advertising opportunities.

Later on, you will hear from Chris Mcinga on the work he has been doing with the office in this regard.

We further welcome efforts by our partners and stakeholders in this work.

Recently, through the support of UN South Africa, the South African Press council, to which many of us belong, had the Press Code translated into xx Indigenous languages.

This is a hugely important intervention. It is a demonstration of commitment by this industry to transform all our quality mechanisms, including the regulatory environment.

We congratulate colleagues in the Press Council who delivered this work.

Finally, colleagues, allow me once again to welcome you and to invite you to constructive deliberations with the incredible speakers lined up today.

We trust that this engagement will be as fruitful and provide the building block upon which we ought to drive our transformative agenda.

Thank you.