

EMBARGOED TILL DELIVERY -CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

2010 - THE COMMUNICATION OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR CONTINENT AND COUNTRY

OPENING SPEECH BY DR ESSOP PAHAD,  
MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY AND MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF THE  
2010 LOCAL ORGANISING COMMITTEE,

2010 National Communication Partnership Conference  
Johannesburg, 15 August 2006.

---

Programme Director;

Our visitors from other countries;

Fellow South Africans

On the day we heard that FIFA had decided to award us the right to host the first African World Cup, it was more than a dream come true. It was a moment of national pride and it signaled that we had truly taken our rightful place in the world of international sport.

We take this moment to remember and recall all the people who have been involved in soccer in South Africa for many years; people who worked for almost a century to unify a sport fragmented by racial policies into a host of organisations.

In the darkest days of the apartheid era we may have dreamed of one day seeing a World Cup match; but never did we dare dream that that one day we would actually host a World Cup. That was an idea that would have seemed unrealisable.

For many decades Africa struggled to get the World Cup hosted in Africa. FIFA's historic decision in 2010 that the 2010 FIFA World Cup should be held in Africa has made the dream of millions of Africans come true. Many who worked for this are no longer with us. Those who believe in the ancestors will know that the ancestors are celebrating - and those who don't will know that their soccer forebears are turning in their graves with joy! They would all be with me when I acknowledge the important and energetic role by President Blatter in ensuring that an African World Cup was high on FIFA's agenda. What a marked contrast to a former FIFA President Stanley Raus.

I still vividly recall, that as a young political activist I went to the then Jan Smuts Airport to demonstrate against Raus' presence in South Africa. I held up a placard that simply but poignantly said "Raus Go Home". Today in August 2010 I along with millions of South Africans am proud to say "Blatter Welcome Home".

There is another dimension that gives 2010 particular significance for us in South Africa, for our continent and for all those across the world who love freedom and democracy - the global solidarity movement that was an integral part of our struggle for freedom and democracy.

We cannot over state the significance of the sport boycott of apartheid South Africa. It is especially important as memories fade and revisionist history is being written. Only a few weeks ago one of our newspapers carried an article from New Zealand as that country marked the anniversary of the landmark demonstration against the Springboks. The article writes off the demonstration and the boycott as producing "no winners". On the contrary, it was a victory over what the United Nations declared was a crime against humanity, and all the freedom loving people in South Africa and around the world were winners.

The boycott and sport sanctions were a significant part of the struggle for freedom. FIFA's support for the boycott was critical. In deciding to expel South Africa in 1976 - as CAF had done - FIFA made a concrete contribution to bringing about democracy in South Africa and indeed to the unification of soccer and of our people. In doing so FIFA aligned itself fully with Africa's resolve to rid the continent and the world of apartheid.

There is a further way in which 2010 transcends anything we could have imagined in those early days - there will be different focus on Africa in general and South Africa in particular. The games of 2010 will be seen by literally billions of people across the world. And in ways that were never possible before, they will for the next four years, be looking at our country and our continent with an intensity that is unlikely to repeat itself for decades.

As we have already seen, this can be a double-edged sword. Some will use it to nurture pessimism or push their own causes. This means that for communicators to seize the opportunities of 2010 they will need to be effective in displacing that kind of negativity with a compelling vision and flow of information that speaks of the reality of progress and of united action to deal with potential problems and challenges.

You will be discussing in detail today the opportunities of marketing and branding of country and continent; and of the ways in which communicators can help realise the potential of 2010 so as to be a catalyst to speed up development programmes.

What I would like to emphasise is that it can also be a catalyst for further nation building, for building national unity, regional integration and continental solidarity.

South Africa's achievements in overcoming the obstacles to freedom and the progress we have achieved in our first years of democracy have created confidence that we can indeed meet the goals we have set ourselves, of halving poverty and unemployment by 2014 and creating a more inclusive society that truly belongs to all. Uniting all of our society around a common vision is essential to reaching those goals - communicators have a crucial role to play and 2010 has the potential to help us immeasurably in these national endeavours.

Those of you who were fortunate enough to attend the 2006 World Cup, together with billions across the world who watched the World Cup will know how much it did to cement a nation previously deeply divided. In the same vein the years leading up to 2010 can and definitely will be the catalyst to the realization of our vision of building a united, cohesive, non-racial, non-sexist democratic and prosperous South Africa.

It is also a matter of mobilising all South Africans to work together to ensure the preparations go smoothly and on schedule; to take the economic opportunities that come; and to make this an unforgettable experience for all - for our visitors and for all South Africans.

We will need to work with African communicators, across the continent, to use the occasion to improve the image of country and continent and convey the message that this is a country alive with possibility and a continent of great opportunity. As communicators we will need to follow the example of the SADC tourism Ministers who met last week and resolved to work together in marketing and branding the region's tourism to ensure that it benefits from 2010. And the next AU summit will be devoting time to discussing 2010 and what it can do to help ensure that the continent works together.

To achieve these objectives will require that all our communicators in their many disciplines pull together in the same broad direction. It is a matter of creativity and

energies being harnessed towards ensuring that 2010 will be remembered for decades to come as an event that left our country and continent more united and more confident about who we are and what we want to become. This does not mean that we must all say exactly the same thing - but that whatever we do communicate should be informed by common messages and shared branding with an eye to ensuring that 2010 benefits Africa.

That is why the proposal made two years ago for a 2010 National Communication Partnership was one which we strongly supported. We have seen it grow, focusing until now on the building of networks and capacity, observing the discipline of self-imposed silence until the end of the 2006 tournament in Germany.

Now is the time to break that silence. I would like to commend the Partnership for holding this conference at the earliest opportunity after the final whistle blew on 2006, and to thank the International Marketing Council for convening it. It is an essential step towards that critically important condition - aligning all our communication as we approach 2010.

When we made our bid to host 2010 as Africa's stage, we said it was Africa's call. That call has been answered and FIFA has declared that our country shall be Africa's stage in 2010.

We said then, and we repeat now with absolute conviction and confidence the message that should inform all that you say in this period, that South Africa is a country alive with possibility and Africa a continent of great opportunities.

What we can say with confidence, as far as the 2010 FIFA World Cup is concerned, is that Africa's time has come! and South Africa is ready!

Let us ensure that as communicators we do our utmost not only to voice that message but to work in such a way that we help make the most of this opportunity of a lifetime. I wish you a hard-working, focused and fruitful engagement with one another!

Thank You.