



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS OF THE 10th SACOD REGIONAL
FILM FORUM IN JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA**

**PRESENTED BY EDDIE MBALO, CEO OF THE NATIONAL
FILM AND VIDEO FOUNDATION**

The Chairman of Southern Africa Communications for Development (Mr. Thaven Naidoo), Members of the Board of SACOD; Facilitators, Professor Martin Mhando, Mr. Feizel Mamdoo, and Professor Keyan Tomaselli, Representatives of funding and partner organisations, participating students, ladies and gentleman, May I say, all protocol observed.

It gives me great pleasure to stand before you this morning at the opening of the Southern Africa Communication for Development (SACOD's) Forum.

I am told, this forum was started ten years ago as a space where the regions' filmmakers get the opportunity to come together, to watch each other's films and discuss ways in which we can ensure that the highest quality productions are produced.

As a peer review process, such platforms are highly recommended as they also give voice and exposure to the new emerging talent in our industries in the region.

Your presence here today, gives testimony to the success of the Forum as a platform for networking and exchanging of ideas, giving great opportunities to regional co-productions, and crew exchanges between the member countries.

This year, the theme of the Forum is “Celebrating the Art of Creative Collaborations”. This is fitting, especially as this event is now in its 10th year. I understand that one of the strengths that the network possesses, is the ability to facilitate for members to work with each other across borders, as evidenced by work done on “The SACOD Series” (1999), Steps for the Future (2002), African Tales (2003) and “A Season of Love” which is currently calling for proposals which has received strong support from the organisation.

Other members have been instrumental in the dissemination of information around key developmental issues of our day, namely, HIV/Aids, child labour, human rights, reproductive health and sexuality to name but a few.

The development of alternative distribution mechanisms through members such as the Film Resource Unit, Video Fair, Sesotho Media, and through the Iris Imaginacoes project Film Afrique, which has ensured the availability of much needed educational programming to rural audiences that are currently not serviced through the broadcast system. Efforts by these projects and others initiated by various players in our sector continue to bear results as current statistics on HIV/Aids continue to show higher awareness figures among audiences exposed to the product. Having said that, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done as we continue to see social problems especially amongst our youth. It is important that we continue to develop content that can be used for the education of this important segment of our population and provide Civil society organizations involved in working with the youth with content to support their programme work.

As the NFVF we have recognized the need to develop skills that will meet the needs of our sector through a bursary scheme that ensures that young people are given an opportunity to develop as fully fledged filmmakers, who then go on to specialize in their different areas of interests. We have also developed programmes like Sediba Skills development Programme that recognize a greater need for script development at script editor level.

We have also developed another programme within Sediba that will begin to look at bringing in new players at entry and intermediary level of script writing.

The South African government in 2003, acknowledged the film industry as a growth area within cultural industries and has called for the development of Customised Sector Programme for film. The NFVF's Value Charter is informed by the CSP template, is designed to present cross cutting strategic initiatives that are necessary for the development and growth of the sector. The Value Charter is also the strategic interpretation of the NFVF act.

As per the NFVF Act, we have also begun the research process that will inform our government on the viability of the National Film School. I hope that our officials have been able to reach your members during this important process.

There are many other programmes that have been initiated by the NFVF, including the recognition of our region within the co-production treaties that we sign with other countries; the African Film Summit, which we hoped was to reestablish dialogue amongst filmmakers in the continent; the restructuring of Sithengi Film and Television Market as a viable platform for business to business exchange; and locally, the South African Film and Television Awards, which celebrate creativity and encourage excellence in our work.

In our efforts to ensure that there is a viable industry in the country, we ourselves have worked in partnership with a number of stakeholders in various capacities, some of who form the SACOD membership. Engagement with the industry has been in recognition of the fact that in order to successfully achieve our objectives, we need to strengthen the working relationship between the independent production sector and ourselves. What the sector needs to understand though is that their role is to influence policy and to a certain extent the strategic direction at all levels. To do that, professional and representative organizations need to have the capacity to engage from an informed position on issues that affect their members. Adopting an antagonistic position to those who have a potential to be your partners will not help the situation, instead it polarizes the environment and hardens attitudes. Governments do not react well to such circumstances; instead they turn to resort to bureaucratic expediency and red tape.

We would also like to congratulate individuals in the network, for their efforts in working with their peers in ensuring that industry in their country is organized and can respond to issues affecting them with one voice. The presence of FEPACI in our region should create an opportunity to reorganize ourselves. The constituency for the Secretary General is the region first and South Africa in the secondary position.

Therefore, it becomes imperative that the region is familiar with the thinking within the Secretariat on how we are all going to contribute to the rebuilding of this important institution. Such organization of industry, is also highly beneficial to us all, as we continue to aim for higher ethical and professional standards. It is therefore important that platforms like these begin to discuss and agree on self regulatory frameworks which can then be adopted by the various national structures of the region.

In conclusion, I would like to remind all here present that as filmmakers, it is our responsibility to ensure that our stories are a reflection of our cultures and the African continent, and will one day give future generations an opportunity to understand the history of our time and the struggles that have gone before us.

May I take this opportunity to welcome you all to South Africa and hope that despite the weather, you will take some time to enjoy some of the recreational activities we have on offer.

I thank you all.