

“ONE COMMONWEALTH, ONE COMMON HERITAGE”

BEING THE WELCOME SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH BROADCASTING ASSOCIATION (CBA), & DIRECTOR GENERAL, VOICE OF NIGERIA (VON), ABUBAKAR BOBBOYI JIJIWA, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 2010 CONFERENCE ON APRIL 19, 2010, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA.

I am most honoured and delighted to welcome everyone to this 28th General Conference of the CBA which takes place every two years. This is a platform that has been nurtured by generations of broadcasters in the Commonwealth of Nations since the first one, which led to the setting up of the CBA, was held as long ago as 1945. So the CBA is probably the oldest international broadcasting organisation in the world, sharing a *common wealth, a common history, a common destiny* and I dare say, a *common – if not too pleasant – heritage*. South Africa has to its credit the honour of hosting a second General Conference and we greatly appreciate the warmth of your hospitality, and the support given to this conference by our active members here, the SABC in particular, and also by e.tv and Sentech.

Since 1945, the CBA has remained faithful to the dreams of its founders as a veritable platform for shared experiences, ***a common history, a common heritage*** and in the finest of traditions of the Commonwealth, a harbinger of hope, liberal democracy and freedom in all its facets. This is the common heritage, which we at the CBA are proud to lead the pack of over 90 other Commonwealth-affiliated organisations. It is this cherished and deeply entrenched heritage that we have kept alive till this day, namely, ***one Commonwealth, one common heritage***.

This is actually reflected in the enthusiasm and passion with which our CBA members have continued to relate with the organisation. Indeed, the confidence of CBA members in the organisation has continued to grow. A recent survey sponsored by the ‘Friends of Canada Award’ shows nearly 70% of CBA member-organisations rated the CBA conferences as either above average or exceptional, with nobody rating them as unsatisfactory. Nearly all the responses showed great appreciation of the work of the CBA.

We are honoured to have President Jacob Zuma, President of South Africa, with us to open the conference. We have chosen a most appropriate and relevant theme for the Conference – ***‘Broadcasting Scores!’*** which was adopted by the CBA upon the suggestion of the SABC. We wish South Africa well in its elaborate World Cup arrangements. This is a matter of huge interest to all of us in the CBA as the World Cup coverage is definitely the biggest broadcasting event of 2010. All hands must therefore be on deck ***in the spirit of one Commonwealth, one common heritage*** to support our South African counterparts to effectively cover the world cup.

In addition to the sports theme to the conference, we also hope to look at many aspects of Public Service Broadcasting currently under threat in many parts of the world. There will be two sessions, for example, on Media Freedom. We salute South Africa for the vitality, vibrancy, strength and independence of its media. We are impressed by South Africa's capacity and penchant for free speech and investigative journalism. Over the years, many of these South Africa's well-known broadcasting feats have been honoured and recognised through our CBA Awards. We will have to await the Awards Ceremony on Tuesday evening to see if there are any South African winners this year. **Our mantra and posture of *one Commonwealth, one common heritage*** propels us to continue to insist on the right to freedom of the press as a cardinal foundation of any cultured society, certainly in the nations of the Commonwealth.

This is a time when the media in many parts of the Commonwealth, and particular in Africa, face exceptional difficulties and challenges. We could have had the opportunity to listen to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Kamallesh Sharma, who was billed to give us a keynote address on this; unfortunately he is unable to be with us today due to the closure of virtually all airports in Europe. It is our fervent hope that despite his absence, this General Conference would in the next few days bring forward solutions and ways to meander through the difficulties **as it is *one humanity, one Commonwealth and one common heritage***.

At the CBA, a forum of seasoned professionals, it is only by coming together and sharing experiences that we learn from each other and contribute to the development of quality broadcasting in each of our countries so that we encourage and support those ideals we hold so dearly, from transparency and accountability in governance to promotion of democracy and freedom. As I step down from office at this conference, after serving two terms as CBA President, it is my fervent hope and prayer that we continue to maintain and improve on this tradition **after all, we are *one Commonwealth, one common heritage***.

Thank you.