

highwayAFRICA

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CONCEPT DOCUMENT FOR HIGHWAY AFRICA CONFERENCE 2011

Theme: African Media and the Global Sustainability Challenge

Dates: 17-19th September 2011

Venue: Cape Town

Background

Highway Africa is a partnership involving Rhodes University (School of Journalism and Media Studies), the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and the Department of Communications (South Africa), with the support of Corporate South Africa, development agencies and media associations.

For fifteen years the Highway Africa conference has been at the centre of Africa's debates on journalism, media and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The conference has over the years become the largest annual gathering of African journalists in the world. In the last seven years Highway Africa has evolved into a multi-pronged programme with the following components:

Research: mapping the terrain of the challenges of the interface of technology, journalism and the media;

Education and Training: responding to the identified gaps this project makes a practical intervention by re-skilling, upskilling, educating and training journalists;

Reporting Development: our new and exciting project that seeks challenge and transform how African journalism and media cover the development agenda. The project consists of three elements – a web portal (www.reportingDNA.org), an annual Reporting Development Forum and training workshops.

Conference: the flagship of the programme, it is the forum for critical reflection on journalism, media and technology and a celebration of Africa.

The 2011 Theme: African Media and Global Sustainability Challenge

The dramatic melting down of the glaciers of the Arctic, the droughts ravaging Africa, the floods in the Americas and ever temperatures rises may have provided drama for television and other media but the issue of global sustainability calls for more drastic and comprehensive response from the media.

Whereas the international media as represented by the various broadcasting networks have woken up to the stark challenge facing the world, African media remains hesitant and unhurried in training its eye on the sustainability challenge.

The holding of the UNFCCC COP 17 Climate Meeting beginning in Durban on 28th November 2011 provides African media and other key stakeholders a unique opportunity to galvanize various key actors.

Highway Africa Conference 2011 will be an opportunity for an interrogation of African journalism and media and how these have framed the issues of climate change, food security and overall global sustainability.

The questions we would like to ask ourselves will include:

- i) How is the global media framing the sustainability challenge?
- ii) How is African media responding to the climate change debates and issues?
- iii) How can African media play a greater role in the information, communication and discourse on climate change and sustainability?
- iv) What are the capacity gaps in African media that hamper effective reporting?
- v) How can stakeholders partner with African media in terms of deeper understanding and coverage of the climate change and sustainability story?
- vi) How can African media prepare adequately for the Climate Change Summit and what platforms would be used to cover the event effectively?

Using plenary sessions, keynote addresses, training workshops, book launches, networking dinners and debates, HA 2011 will be an occasion for somber reflections but also an occasion to celebrate human ingenuity as we confront our greatest challenge: climate change and sustainability.

Reporting Development Forum

Incorporated in the main conference will be the 3rd Reporting Development Forum (RDF). The RDF will bring together Africa's top media professionals, communication for development experts, government communication staff and academics to debate issues including:

- Media and Africa's development agenda (health, economics, trade and agriculture)
- Business and Social Sustainability

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