



opinion

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EDITORIAL

Media freedom is sacrosanct

FOR THE past 25 years since the dawn of democracy, the South African Constitution has been unambiguous in its call for all to uphold freedom of speech, including the freedom of the press.

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

The UN goes on to say that a free media ensures that transparency, accountability and the rule of law takes place, and also promotes participation in public and political discourse.

By being a signatory to all the universal declarations South Africa and, ultimately, her people, commit themselves to non-censorship.

It boggles the mind that in 2019 there are those who are hell-bent on discriminating against certain media houses.

A glaring example is through a post that made the rounds on social media yesterday in which a user shared pictures on Twitter of posters with a logo reportedly from an *Vida e Caffè* situated in Newlands, Cape Town.

The posters in question stated that the *Caffè* is an "Independent Media-free zone and does not carry the Cape Times, (Cape) Argus and the Weekend Argus (newspapers)."

Vida e Caffè franchisee Justin Fenn has since apologised for the posters and has indicated that the respective newspapers will be back on the stand.

The Commissioner of Human Rights in the European Council previously said there were worrying signals of repression and violations of media freedom in a number of European states.

In Africa, laws surrounding media freedom have equally been flouted.

While in light of the *Vida e Caffè* incident it may be argued that everyone has the right to freedom of speech, the Constitution in its precepts warns against propaganda that seeks to fuel discrimination and hatred.

This incident involving the *Caffè* reeks of nothing but discrimination. It is an indictment on the work that so many media practitioners who have suffered in the past have done over the last few years to end censorship.

We all need to stand against such instances and not allow them to fester, for if they do, we will surely allow historical events such as Black Wednesday to repeat themselves.



THE continent is on the cusp of unlocking a period of unparalleled prosperity in the coming African Century, says the writer. | OUPA MOKOENA African News Agency (ANA)

Africa in New World Order

Continent's influence as a single market has ramifications for how we will shape our role

COMMENT



IVOR ICHIKOWITZ

YOU'VE probably heard the notion of the coming African Century, as a new wave of foreign investment and international interest descend on the continent to get into position in anticipation of future growth.

As The Economist reports, competition among foreign companies and governments to strengthen ties with Africa presents historic opportunities.

What is different about the rush of optimism for Africa in this New World Order, compared to the similarly high expectations which followed independence or the end of the Cold War, is the continent's newfound potential for greater intercontinental collaboration, its commitment to market liberalisation and its embrace of Fourth Industrial Revolution-inspired technological innovation.

Africa hosts extraordinary market power. We have 20% of the planet's landmass, vast natural resource wealth, and a population growing at a rate which should be larger than China within 10 years, but demographically primed for production.

According to International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasts, sub-Saharan Africa's contribution to the increase in the global labour force will exceed that from the rest of the world combined by 2030.

The embrace of 4IR-inspired digital production technologies has enabled the breakout of manufacturing to take shape. These enable us to serve as innovators and exporters of world-beating technologies.

There are risks and challenges to

overcome. The continent is economically fractured into 16 trade zones due to geographic challenges, hosting an enduring lack of policy co-ordination.

Global conditions, such as migration patterns, are provoking a nationalist backlash in Europe and unfortunate incidents of xenophobia in South Africa. Conflict and competition between the US and China threatens to depress global demand, while instability in the Middle East has knock-on effects in crisis-prone areas of Africa.

But there are far more encouraging trends that appear to indicate that we are on the cusp of unlocking a new period of prosperity.

A recent study by the Boston Consulting Group highlights that between 2006 and 2007 as well as 2015 and 2016, the amount of capital African firms invested in Africa increased from \$3.7 billion to \$10bn.

Intra-regional M&A deals jumped from 238 to 418; the average annual intra-African exports increased from \$41bn to \$65bn; and the average number of African tourists travelling

within Africa rose from 19 million to 30 million – almost half of all tourists on the continent.

Now, consider the massive potential for growth if Africa is able to implement the recently forged African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), signed by 49 countries. Intra-regional trade encapsulates roughly 17% of exports as compared to well above 50% to 60% in Europe and Asia.

But according to the UN Economic Commission for Africa, Africa's intra-regional trade is to increase by between \$50bn and \$70bn by 2040 solely due to the removal of tariffs proposed under AfCFTA.

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The global labour force will exceed that from the rest of the world

The increasing economic influence of Africa as a single market has important ramifications for how we shape and determine our role in the international system; the responsibilities of global leadership we are able to assume alongside allies and partners.

Our continent's leaders are rising to the challenges presented by the New World Order and are articulating alternative narratives on pressing global issues including international trade, and addressing challenges such as climate change and inequality.

It is critical that the philanthropic

community, follow suit. Our philanthropic efforts are becoming more effective as they become more home-grown. Africa is self-addressing the critical challenges, investing in financial inclusion, renewable energy and intercontinental security, as examples.

I'm proud of the role of my foundation in working alongside private and public sector partners to spearhead conservation and anti-poaching initiatives to preserve our rich heritage and biodiversity.

Poaching is a major security issue, financing terrorism, human and drug trafficking and the arming of militias. Left unaddressed, the wider stability and economic growth of the continent is at risk.

There is work to be done amid the shifting geopolitical and commercial environment. Africans must continue to explore supporting the continent's economic empowerment, pursuing greater market liberalisation through greater intra-African collaboration, and further fuel a culture of 4IR technological innovation-driven industrialisation.

We must together develop a deeper understanding of our newfound role in decision-making in this New World Order. Only then will Africans write for themselves one of the great economic success stories of the 21st century.

Ichikowitz is an African industrialist, entrepreneur, philanthropist and executive chairman of the Ichikowitz Family Foundation. The views expressed are his own

Water security in face of climate change

THEMBA KHOZA

SOUTH Africa is water scarce and one of the driest countries in the world, while the continuing drop in volumes of our water resources and the less than required rain, is putting a serious dent in its availability, as well as putting a strain on water security for the current generation. And this will probably also affect future generations.

The current situation being experienced in the country and throughout the world, is a direct result of climate change, and this calls for all of us to adapt and work together to minimise the negative impact of climate change.

Climate change has brought about major changes in weather patterns which have a direct impact on water resources and water availability, which is mostly negative in water-scarce countries like ours.

As a result of climate change, we

see less rainfall and high temperatures, leading to high levels of evaporation, which in turn have a serious negative impact on available water.

Climate change is basically the reason for the continuous drop in water volumes in our dams, rivers and other water resources. The drought we are experiencing is one of the negative impacts of climate change affecting our livelihoods, so we really need to adapt to the new reality.

Looking at the current rainfall and water availability trends, it is quite obvious that we continue to receive less and less rainfall each successive year, and it does not seem the situation will change in coming years.

Currently, the government and water users are exploring ground water to augment the dwindling surface water resources. Due to high demand and continuous high temperatures as a direct result of climate change, we

run the risk of depleting the available ground water resources.

Water security depends on each and every one of us treating water as our main treasure and using it with the utmost care.

This calls for a change in our mindset and behaviour in relation to water use. A change in behaviour and mindset will ensure that not a single drop of water goes to waste.

Responsible behaviour and mindset will ensure that no leaks and pipe bursts go unattended, resulting in high volumes of water going to waste.

Water security is in our hands. Turning a blind eye to water wastage shows irresponsible behaviour, and must be discouraged at all times.

Communities, water users and the government must work together to ensure water security. It must be a strong chain as we need all hands on deck for water security, especially as

our country is so water scarce.

Let us work with our municipalities to reduce water losses and conserve more of the precious fluid. Remember, it all starts with you as an individual.

Communities also need to understand that water restrictions are the last resort to protect the infrastructure and ensure that users and communities downstream also enjoy their human right of access to water. It is, therefore, crucial to work together and adhere to the imposed restrictions for the security of supply for all.

Water is life. Let us be responsible citizens and always use the available water wisely and efficiently, and be safe on rainy days as water security and our lives and safety depends on our behaviour and actions.

Khoza is a communications manager at the Mpumalanga Department of Water and Sanitation

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