



SEYCHELLES BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Press Statement

United Seychelles Press Conferences are not banned on SBC

Following statements made by the Leader of the Opposition in National Assembly on Tuesday 29th March 2022, the SBC is making it clear that it has not banned the US Press Conferences on its platforms. It has, however, made the decision not to broadcast them *live*. The reasons for this were communicated to the United Seychelles in a letter on 28th March.

This decision follows a series of communications with the Party to try and improve on the content of these Press Conferences, and for these to be in line with the SBC's Policy on Press Conferences, issued in May 2021. The Policy states:

"Freedom of expression normally comes with responsibilities. And in the case of a Live Political Press Conference, this responsibility falls largely on the requestee and their nominated speakers who hold the legal and moral responsibility to speak the truth, to avoid hate speech, not to incite hatred and discord, and to not cause undue offence or harm to others.

When any entity or a Political Party provides a recorded programme for broadcast, for example a Political Party Broadcast, the programme is reviewed to ensure that it meets all of the SBC's editorial requirements. Since this is not possible with live broadcasts, the SBC will ensure an ongoing editorial review of such live press conference.

If it is subsequently deemed that the Corporation's editorial and ethical principles are continually and/or unduly being breached, the Corporation will not approve any further live broadcasts for that particular entity.

There is a clear need to achieve an acceptable balance between the right to freedom of expression, the protection of the ideals of a democracy and the responsibility that these entails.

The SBC, therefore, appeals to all stakeholders to ensure that this service is used wisely and only when necessary, to propagate information that is new, correct and true.

SBC, on its part reiterates its commitment to continue playing its role, not only to inform and educate the public, but as a key player in one of the four pillars of our democracy."

To-date, the SBC has issued three letters to the United Seychelles leadership requesting for improvements in line with the above-mentioned expectations. SBC's CEO and DCEO also held a meeting with the Party Leader and the Leader of the Opposition in January 2022, for the same purpose.

The manner in which United Seychelles are conducting these Press Conferences and their reluctance to heed to advice and encouragement given to improve, poses reputational and legal risks to the SBC. The decision not to air the US press conferences live is aimed at mitigating these risks.



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The SBC has also refuted statements that United Seychelles has to plead with the SBC to repeat their Press Conferences or to have them posted online.

There has been 13 Press Conferences from United Seychelles since January 2021 to-date. The SBC says that the only US Press Conference which was not rebroadcast and is also not available on its YouTube Channel is the Press Conference of 18th March 2022. All the other Press Conferences can also be accessed on the SBC's YouTube channel.

The Corporation says that allegations that it is conspiring with the government to ban US from airing programmes on SBC is false and malicious. Any decisions taken not to rebroadcast a content, or not to provide live coverage are based on sound internal editorial decisions that will stand up to fair scrutiny.

The SBC has said that such a statement is contradictory, since it is the current SBC administration that introduced policies for monthly Party-Political Programmes and Political Press Conferences and that such programmes did not exist at all before 2021, except during the political campaigns.

The Corporation has also stated that there is no record of any formal complaint received from the Leader of the Opposition, contrary to what he asserted in the National Assembly. SBC has received some informal complaints from Mr. Pillay, a couple of which has been taken up and investigated formally by the Corporation.

The SBC is calling for it to be provided with examples to substantiate the accusations of bias and political interference that are being made against it. This is with the aim of ensuring that, where any such instances are established, the Corporation takes these as learning points to do better. This is an ongoing undertaking as part of the SBC's *Continuous Improvements* endeavours.