

Ralph Fletcher, CEO, TopCo

Email received on March 8, 2024

TOP MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS (PTY) LTD AND TOP WOMEN // MEDIA ENQUIRIES
GROUNDUP NEWS

Dear Raymond,

On **5 March 2024** we were contacted by Standard Bank and informed that it had received a media enquiry from GroundUp News. As the organizer of the Top Women conference, we are best placed to respond to the enquiry.

Topco and Top Women

Topco is a market leading events management, publications, communications and media company which, inter alia, hosts conferences, talks and awards events and publishes certain media and magazines. We interact with and offer marketing and advertising opportunities to various organs of state, public sector entities and private entities.

Our well-known Top Women brand was first established in 2003 and includes a publication, a conference and awards. See <https://www.topbusinesswomen.co.za/> for further details and information. In and during 2017, Standard Bank became the title sponsor of our Top Women brand. The terms of the sponsorship agreement are confidential.

Although Topco does provide limited design and content creation services for our customers and advertisers, we do so from time-to-time and at an additional expense; our normal practice is for customers to provide their own content and material. Topco reserves the right to withhold, suspend or change any material for publication that we receive from our customers.

Top Women 2021 and the National Lotteries Commission

In and during **February 2021**, Topco presented a proposal to the National Lotteries Commission ("NLC") in respect of the Top Women awards and conference and the NLC requested a quotation for services in respect of the conference scheduled for **6 and 7 October 2021** ("Services").

The Services included a 90-minute main plenary session, a virtual expo stand, delegate passes to participate in the online conference, tickets to the online awards ceremony, pages in the publication and a senior representative of the NLC to be interviewed (no mention of any 'flash-mob' was made). (package cost was R220,000 + VAT)

The NLC issued a purchase order in the amounts quoted and Topco issued an invoice for such amount. The NLC paid the amount as invoiced. The NLC provided Topco with promotional video content showcasing the NLC's projects and distributions and a prepared address by the (then) Commissioner of the NLC, Ms Thabang Mampane, for use at the conference.

In the leadup to the conference, during a meeting with Topco in mid-**September 2021**, the NLC's discussed a 'flash-mob' video idea – video content which the NLC would fund and facilitate - for inclusion during its session at the conference.

A couple of days later we sent an email to the NLC, in which it was communicated that Topco would not be able to play the 'flash-mob' video during the NLC's conference session on [6 October 2021](#). The NLC did not deliver the proposed 'flash-mob' video before the conference was hosted and it was not included in the NLC's approved conference program.

The conference, hosted at a time when the State and various Government Ministers had imposed health protocols and social distancing measures such that events such as the conference could not be attended in person, was hosted virtually and broadcast live.

The conference can still be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ximAED8nLxQ>. The NLC's session at the conference can be viewed from 4:28:57 onwards.

The NLC's session included its promotional video content, Ms Mampane's address and a mediated panel discussion involving Vuyolwethu Dubese, Ayanda Mvimbi, Modupe Adefeso-Olateju and Tinstswalo Nkuna, entitled "Programmes that accelerate Gender Empowerment".

The 'flash-mob' does not feature and it did not feature elsewhere at the conference.

On [23 October 2021](#), the NLC's Ms Mokwebo sent an email to Topco and queried the discussions on the 'flash-mob' video, noted that the NLC was "nearing completion of the advert" and communicated the NLC's intention to submit the video for inclusion at the upcoming Top Women awards, scheduled for [4 November 2021](#).

On [25 October 2021](#), Topco sent an email to the NLC and took issue with the NLC's request and noted that the NLC had not entered the awards nor submitted any nominations (the awards did not form part of the Services provided to the NLC).

Topco never received a response to these emails and we had not, until your email on [5 March 2024](#), heard anything further of the 'flash-mob'.

Re: Your Enquiries

Although your enquiries are answered by what is stated above, for the sake of completeness, we address them as follows:

"1) What was the relationship between the NLC and Standard Bank concerning this virtual conference?"

There was no relationship between the NLC and Standard Bank concerning the Top Women conference.

"2) Did Standard Bank receive a payment or any form of sponsorship for this conference from the NLC?"

No.

"3) If so, how much was this payment or sponsorship worth?"

Not applicable.

"4) What did it cover?"

Not applicable.

"5) Was Standard Bank involved in funding and/or production of the so-called flash mob (in fact, a video with three dancers in a studio played during the virtual conference)?"

No.

"6) Have the NLC, the SIU, the SAPS or the Hawks been in contact with Standard Bank in connection with this virtual conference or any other issues involving the lottery?"

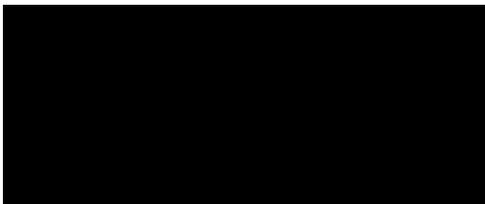
No.

We trust the information contained herein and attached hereto suffices for the purposes of your investigation and the enquiries made. We thank you for the opportunity afforded for us to offer a response. We remain available to you should you wish to discuss the matter further.

Yours Sincerely,

Ralf Fletcher
CEO
Topco

Ralf Fletcher
Chief Executive Officer



We started working with the NLC in February 2021 (at that stage working with NLC's Comms department. Ndivhuho Mafela's team. He was on the fringes. All emails were from Gladys. No involvement by Mokwebo. Only received the purchase order in July 2021.

In Sept Topco got an email from Gladys and for the first time Mokwebo was cc'd in one or two emails.

Top Women Conference was on Oct 6 and 7, 2023

Top Women Awards were on November 4, 2023.

Mokwebo wanted the flash mob played at the awards. TopCo said no