

Yiannis Theodorou  
PSB Review  
Ofcom  
Riverside House  
2A Southwark Bridge Road  
London SE1 9HA

4 December 2008

Dear Yiannis Theodorou,

### **The wider world and public service broadcasting**

I am writing to you as executive director of UK-based **tv/e**\* to comment on Ofcom's public service broadcasting review. **tv/e** has been making films about environment and development for television audiences in the UK and around the world for nearly 25 years.

**tv/e** welcomes the timely, vital review by Ofcom of public service broadcasting. **tv/e**'s view, as an organisation which is intimately involved in broadcasting on global issues, is that British broadcasters are not providing a sufficiently globalised picture. Your review has the power to encourage broadcasters, as part of a strong public service remit, to keep pace with the globalised needs and realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We fully endorse public funding for broadcasters. But we believe that PSB must include, as part of any funding arrangement, the broadcasting of sufficient, engaging, ambitious and/or entertaining coverage of international issues that connect British audiences to the world.

**tv/e** is a member of IBT (International Broadcasting Trust) and we endorse its submission to Ofcom's Second Public Service Broadcasting Review: Phase Two. For the sake of brevity I do not reiterate the contents of the IBT submission here but wish to particularly underscore the points 1-17 in IBT's Introduction to its submission which set out very clearly the urgent need for action.

In today's world, it is no longer possible to argue that international issues are side issues. The financial crisis, climate change, 9/11, the attacks in Mumbai – such events make a truly global understanding imperative. If the British public is genuinely to engage in the world as global citizens, it is entitled to, and requires, a global understanding.

Our experience is that at both a UK and at a global level, television and digital audiences know and understand this. Life on the Edge, for example – our recent series exploring the moral, political and cultural dilemmas triggered by globalisation around the world - attracted over 110,000 page views the day its interactive website went live. Feedback posted on the website made clear how viewers engaged in, and empathised with, the choices facing individuals living in



very different countries and cultures than their own. The fact that the Mumbai events, or the tsunami, or the war in Afghanistan, prompt immediate, daily, active debate on social networking sites shows the appetite for global connections. As your report on public service broadcasting also shows, more than eight out of ten people in the UK rate 'trustworthiness' and programming that helps them understand what is going on in the world as the most important elements of public service broadcast provision.

Specifically with regard to Channel 4, we applaud its distinctive, innovative voice, its reach to diverse and ethnic audiences and its commitment to a broad set of voices. We are pleased to see its commitment in *Next on 4* to public service broadcasting, specifically covering the issues of globalisation, mass migration and freedom of conscience. We support its request for public funding as a broadcaster providing a vital voice in public service broadcasting alongside the BBC.

We do believe that public funding of content needs to be linked to a commitment to keep high quality programming about international issues on television. Digital innovation is vital and appropriate as a means of encouraging interactivity and connection, and we welcome the commitment from Channel 4 to this. But television remains the primary source of information about poverty in the developing world, according to DFID (Department of International Development).

The wider world has moved centre stage. British broadcasters must use the opportunity offered by the public service broadcasting review to shift coverage of the wider world to reflect this changing reality, and to keep it where it belongs, in mainstream television.

Yours sincerely



Cheryl Campbell  
executive director

**\*tve** makes an average of 80 films each year on the environment and development. Our films are broadcast in the UK, on global channels, and on national, regional and local channels in 170 countries. Along with our 50 **tve** partners in 45 countries, we work with broadcasters worldwide to reach global, national and local audiences hungry for news, information and entertainment about the issues that matter. In addition to producing films that reach 274 million homes, **tve** produces films for mainstream terrestrial broadcast in the UK. We know and understand UK audiences.