



United Nations Human Rights  
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

## **2014 World Press Freedom Day: Free media reinforces the post-2015 goals**

On the occasion of the 2014 World Press Freedom Day, UN experts\* underscored the freedom of the press. They also addressed the lack in the promotion and protection of the rights to freedom of expression and information, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association and public participation in some countries.

Reiterating the Vienna Declaration and that all human rights are universal, indivisible, and interdependent, the experts underlined the fact that the rights to freedom of expression and information, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association, and public participation are essential for achieving the realization of all human rights for all, and related development goals. Decision-making, including that related to sustainable development, must be democratic, transparent and participatory.

The UN experts expressed concern at the many attacks on journalists and human rights defenders, including members of civil society organisations, and those demanding good governance and governmental accountability.

They also pointed to the fact that the full recognition of the rights to freedom of expression and information, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association, and public participation contributes to the full achievement of the millennium development goals.

The experts recalled the need to work towards more inclusive political processes, genuine participation by all in all countries, ensuring freedom of the media to play its role, and guaranteeing the right of the public to have access to information. They also emphasized the importance of the environmental impact assessments.

The experts highlighted the Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which recommended adoption of a governance goal, including the protection of access to information, free media and protection of civic space. They also noted the discussions in the GA Open Working Group and the recognition in Focus Area 19 of the need for rule of law and capable institutions. They also recalled earlier contributions of special procedures to the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

On the occasion of the 2014 World Press Freedom Day, the UN independent experts called upon all States to:

### *Rights to freedom of expression and information*

- Ensure that all undue restrictions to the free flow of information and discourse relating to the realisation of development issues are eliminated, in particular, measures such as

ensorship, banning, blocking, and other obstruction to the dissemination of related information by the media, including through new information technologies;

- Refrain from influencing the content and means of dissemination of development-related information by the media through financial and other means;
- Publish comprehensive, reliable, accurate and accessible information related to the development agenda, including information necessary for individuals to exercise their rights; and information about available services and supplies, budgets, expenditures, revenues or aid policies;
- Ensure that all obstacles preventing people from accessing information on development matters are removed and access to information is facilitated by simple and effective processes;
- Ensure that information and data related to development issues are collected on a regular basis, that they are maintained in an organised and systematic manner and are disaggregated to address particular needs of groups who are marginalised, vulnerable or discriminated against;
- Ensure that legal, regulatory and public policy frameworks for the media, including digital technologies, guarantee their independence, diversity and pluralism, and thus, allow for independent investigation and reporting on issues relating to development and poverty alleviation;
- Adopt comprehensive national laws, regulations and policies on the rights to freedom of expression and information in accordance with international and regional norms and standards. States should also ensure that public authorities at all levels, and private bodies carrying public functions, proactively inform the population about development-related issues, particularly those related to education, environment, health, water and sanitation, and poverty reduction;

#### *Rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly*

- Refrain from preventing individuals and groups from expressing dissenting views regarding development issues and facilitate access of civil society organisations – registered and unregistered – to financial and other resources, including from foreign or international sources, without prior authorisation or other undue impediments;
- Remove other undue restrictions on civil society organisations, so that they can effectively take part in democratic process, and support their efforts to full realisation of sustainable development;
- Ensure that a safe and enabling environment is created for individuals and groups so they can exercise their right to assemble peacefully and associate freely to voice their opinions, concerns and demands relating to development issues, individually and collectively, in conformity with international human rights obligations and standards;

#### *Right to public participation*

- Guarantee the active, free and meaningful participation of individuals, communities and groups representing them in development decision-making processes – at international, national, regional and local levels;
- Establish development indicators and benchmarks and ensure that they are used in monitoring States' progress towards the full realisation of the development agenda;

- Ensure that consultation processes are not merely superficial or limited to overall information sharing, but are conducted in good faith and provide real and meaningful opportunities to freely and actively influence decisions;
- Ensure that human rights, social, cultural and environmental strategic and impact assessments relating to all development industries and sectors are conducted by independent and technically competent entities and are produced in a manner that is understandable to affected individuals and communities. Adequate safeguards and mechanisms of control over such assessments should be put in place.
- Make sure that human rights, social, cultural and environmental strategic and impact assessments give due consideration to the concerns of all those affected and to holders of traditional knowledge and practices
- Ensure that all related information, including any impact assessments, is communicated in an efficient manner, at the start of the decision-making and throughout the process at an appropriate time, through multiple channels and using culturally appropriate procedures;
- Ensure that meetings are organized in the locality of those affected and in locations that can be easily accessed, two-way translations for local languages are provided and jargon or highly technical terms are avoided and appeal mechanisms are available for affected communities if they believe that their opinions were not fairly considered;
- Undertake special efforts for genuine participation of individuals and groups who are vulnerable, marginalized, disadvantaged and discriminated against, in particular women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, indigenous people, members of minority groups, youth, persons with disabilities refugees and internally displaced people, non-nationals, including asylum seekers and migrant workers, in the decision-making processes.

#### *Conducive environment*

- Take all necessary measures to ensure that all sectors of society – including women and other groups most at risk – are able to exercise their rights to freedom of expression and information, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association, and public participation without discrimination.
- Ensure a safe and enabling environment, in law and practice, for human rights defenders, including civil society organizations, which guarantees their independence and their right to carry out their work without fear of harassment, intimidation, stigmatization, reprisals, criminalisation or violence of any sort.

The experts concluded by emphasizing the fact that media organisations should recognise the role they can play in framing issues of public importance and helping to satisfy the public's need for information in development issues, draw attention to and expose any violations of human rights in this area and provide platforms for inclusive public debate about related issues, reflecting a diversity of views and perspectives.

#### **(\*)The experts:**

- *Frank La Rue, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.*

- *Maina Kiai, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.*
- *Catarina de Albuquerque, Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation.*
- *John Knox, Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.*
- *Anand Grover, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.*
- *Margaret Sekaggya, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.*
- *Alfred De Zayas, Independent expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order.*
- *Gustavo Gallon, Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Haiti.*
- *Mads Andenas, Chair-Rapporteur Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.*
- *Najat Maalla M'JID, Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.*
- *Christof Heyns, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.*
- *Surya Subedi, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia.*
- *Mirjana Najcevska, Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent.*
- *Virginia Dandan, Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity.*
- *Ms. Patricia Arias, Chair-Rapporteur Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination.*
- *Farida Shaheed, Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights.*
- *Magdalena Sepulveda, Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights.*
- *François Crépeau, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants.*
- *Tomas Ojea Quintana, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar.*
- *Raquel Rolnik Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context.*
- *Marzuki Darusman, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.*
- *Pablo de Greiff, Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.*
- *Gulnara Shahinian, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and its consequences.*
- *Sheila Keetharuth, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea.*
- *Richard Falk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.*
- *Juan Mendez, Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.*
- *Miklós Haraszti, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus.*
- *Mashood Baderin, Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan.*
- *Olivier de Schutter, Special Rapporteur on the right to food.*
- *Heiner Bielefeldt, Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief.*
- *Chaloka Beyani, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons.*

Millennium Declaration, Resolution 55/2 of the UN General Assembly (GA) and Principles 10 and 17 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.

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