



Riga Declaration

World Press Freedom Day International Conference, 2-4 May 2015

“Let Journalism Thrive! Towards Better Reporting, Gender Equality, and Media Safety in the Digital Age”

We, the participants at the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day International Conference held at the National Library in Riga, Latvia from 2-4 May 2015 and on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the founding of UNESCO

- Recalling Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: “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”;
- Recognising that freedom of expression across all media platforms is an enabler of sustainable human development, including a culture of peace;
- Believing that freedom of expression, which underpins press freedom and the right to access information, applies online and offline and is central to democracy, social equality, the enjoyment of other human rights as well as economic growth and welfare;
- Honoring all those who work in media, in whatever context, who often risk their personal security in service of the public’s right to information;
- Further noting that 2015 is the 20th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which calls on the international community to “increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision making in and through the media and new technologies of communication” and to “promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media”;
- Recognising that everyone’s right to freedom of expression depends upon the safety of journalists and an end to impunity for crimes against them, as reflected in UN Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/27/5, the United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/69/185, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1738, UNESCO’s Executive Board Decision 196 EX/Decision 31 as well as the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, which UNESCO is co-ordinating through various activities including the Journalist Safety Indicators;
- Emphasising that international organisations, governments, media and other actors should work together to strengthen the safety of journalists and hold accountable those who attack them;
- Acknowledging the principles and recommendations of the previous World Press Freedom Day Declarations, in particular the Washington Declaration on 21st Century Media: New Frontiers, New Barriers and the Paris Declaration on Media Freedom for a Better Future: Shaping the Post-2015 Development Agenda;
- Noting that the 2015 World Press Freedom Day takes place at an important juncture, with the opportunity to rally attention to the importance of freedom of expression in the final processes of the global post-2015 development agenda negotiations;

We accordingly affirm that:

1. Freedom of expression, press freedom and the right of access to information are fundamental rights and enable the enjoyment of all other human rights and the goals of sustainable development;

2. The safety of journalists and the issue of impunity are directly relevant to implementing the proposed Sustainable Development Goal 16, particularly the targets on fundamental freedoms, access to information and the rule of law;
3. Journalism contributes to the rule of law, vigilance against corruption, the promotion of policy debates, the deepening of transparency in society, and the ability of citizens to make informed decisions, and thus enables them to actively participate in public affairs.
4. Overcoming poverty, social inequality and advancing sustainable development requires that citizens have access to reliable and quality information and inclusive platforms for public voice and different opinions;
5. Women and men have the right to equal access, expression and participation in decision-making in and through the media, as well as to balanced and non-stereotypical presentation;
6. Competency in media and information literacy as well as open-minded and critical thinking skills are essential to ensuring that everyone is empowered in seeking, receiving, and imparting information, regardless of frontiers;

We therefore:

Call on UNESCO Member States to:

1. Reaffirm the important roles that freedom of expression and a free, independent and pluralistic news media play in the advancement of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights;
2. Take positive measures, such as adopting and investing in gender-responsive initiatives to improve the gender representativeness of media content and services, as well as ensuring equal pay and decent work conditions for men and women;
3. Reaffirm their commitment to promote a legal and institutional environment which ensures the safety of journalists;
4. Condemn all attacks on journalists and ensure that such crimes are subject to independent, speedy and effective investigations and prosecutions, and to provide voluntarily comprehensive and timely responses to the call by the UNESCO Director-General for information about investigations into killings of journalists, in line with the decisions of the Organization's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC);
5. Ensure a diversity of independent media whose ownership and financing are transparent to the public.
6. Support frameworks that can ensure greater independence of journalists and editorial boards from economic, political and other pressures that constrain their work;
7. Support the provision of quality training and education for journalists, as well as promote media and information literacy, as part of long-term efforts to promote media sustainability and professionalisation;
8. Ensure that surveillance and data collection regimes show respect for the privacy of journalists and protect the confidentiality of sources.

Call on journalists, professional and support associations, media outlets, internet intermediaries and social media practitioners:

1. To share good practices on the safety of journalists, particularly as implemented by the decision-makers of news organizations from all regions, including community media and small media outlets;
2. To support the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity with complementary or joint actions, and to enhance cooperation with each other;
3. To consider using Journalist Safety Indicators as a measurement and evaluation tool in their own activities.
4. To apply the same principles of protection to staff journalists and freelancers and favorably consider applying the Global Safety Principles and Practices adopted by dozens of organizations in February 2015.
5. To encourage journalism that seeks out voices and opinions from communities often excluded from public space, harassed online, or subject to other forms of official and unofficial abuse.
6. Take corrective action in support of gender equality in the newsroom and in news coverage, such as through adopting policies for gender-sensitive training and reporting, increased focus on women as newsmakers and news sources, and the provision of work conditions for men and women which allow the balancing of work and family responsibilities.

Call on UNESCO to:

1. Continue highlighting the importance of freedom of expression, public access to information and the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity within the post-2015 development agenda processes;
2. Promote the importance of free, independent and pluralistic media as an essential prerequisite for good governance and the rule of law;
3. Continue monitoring the safety of journalists and state of impunity, and submit reports about this on a regular basis;
4. Strengthen the implementation of the UN Plan of Action to further interested countries, and to continue coordinating the implementation of the UN Plan of Action throughout the UN system, in particular at country level;
5. Continue encouraging governments to harness the support of the UN Plan of Action on Safety and the Issue of Impunity, and to implement various UN resolutions mentioned in the Preamble above;
6. Strengthen cooperation with professional organizations and other actors in addressing the safety of journalists, with a specific focus on women journalists;
7. Make all appropriate efforts to strengthen and promote UNESCO's model curricula for journalism education, including safety of journalists, and to enhance the development of UNESCO's programmes on Media and Information Literacy;
8. Promote further application of the Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media and the Journalist Safety Indicators;
9. Facilitate capacity-building in Member States, including through IPDC projects and South-South and North-South cooperation.
10. Respond to the issue of hate speech by promoting media and information literacy and counter-speech, and by highlighting that any limitations on expression have to be necessary, proportionate and for reasons of preventing advocacy of incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, in line with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).