



## MAPUTO DECLARATION

FOSTERING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF PEOPLE *open* Topics

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FOSTERING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF PEOPLE

We, the participants in the UNESCO conference on “Freedom of Expression, Access to Information and Empowerment of People,” meeting in Maputo, Mozambique, on World Press Freedom Day, 3 May 2008,

**Recalling**, on the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19 of that Declaration, 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.”

**Reaffirming** that freedom of expression is a fundamental right, and essential to the realization of other freedoms set forth in international human rights instruments,

**Acknowledging** the Declarations of Windhoek, of Alma-Ata, of Sana'a, of Santiago, and of Sofia, which stress that establishment, maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential for democracy and for development,

**Recognizing** that the commitments in the Millennium Development Declaration require two-way communications that foster dialogue and allow citizens and communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns, and participate in the decisions concerning their development.

**Underscoring** the provisions of the [Medellin Declaration](#) of 3 May 2007 on Safety of journalists and Impunity, the [Colombo Declaration](#) of 3 May 2006 on Media and Poverty Eradication, the [Dakar Declaration](#) of 3 May 2005 on Media and Good Governance, the [Belgrade Declaration](#) of 3 May 2004 on Media in Violent Conflict and Countries in Transition,

**Recognizing** that freedom of expression and access to information are essential to democratic discourse and open and informed debate, thereby fostering government transparency and accountability, peoples' empowerment, and citizens' participation,

**Noting** the contributions of free, independent and pluralistic media to sustainable and human development, poverty eradication, good governance, peace and reconciliation, sound environments, and respect for human rights,

**Aware** that technological advances make possible increased and more pluralistic information flows within and across borders,

**Stressing** the need for affordable access to Internet connectivity and ICT for information-sharing, as well as the need to promote media literacy,

**Emphasizing** the particular contribution that all three tiers of broadcasters – public service, commercial and community – make to media diversity and, in particular, the role of community broadcasters in fostering underrepresented or marginalized populations' access to information, voice and participation in decision-making processes.

**Honoring** those journalists and other media workers who seek, through the dissemination of accurate and fair reports, to nurture freedom of expression and access to information;

**Reaffirming** the condemnation of violence against and harassment of journalists and other media workers,

### Call on Member States:

To foster the free flow of information through policies founded on the four key principles of inclusive knowledge societies: freedom of expression, equal access to quality education, universal access to information, and respect for cultural diversity;

To vigorously implement commitments to freedom of expression through a legal and regulatory environment that respect press freedom and independence, and enables media diversity;

To recognize access to information as a key contribution to the effectiveness of development aid, both from the donor and recipient countries' perspectives;

To provide legal guarantees for the right to information which reflect the principles of maximum and facilitated disclosure, protection of whistleblowers, limited scope of exceptions, independent appeals mechanisms and strong proactive disclosure rules, as well as to ensure proper implementation in practice of these guarantees;

To ensure that public bodies respect the principles of open government, transparency, accountability and public access to information;

To promote broad awareness of legislation and of policies on access to information held by public bodies, among civil servants and officials as well as by the media and the general public;

To foster an environment in which new communication and information technologies are used to narrow the digital and knowledge divide in developing countries and to provide a plurality of media options and access to news;

To prevent measures that hinder freedom of expression on Internet, particularly website censorship;  
To include information and media literacy in school curricula and promote such skills to ensure greater public access to information useful in peoples' daily lives through Internet and other IT resources and thus enhance citizens' participation in public debate;

To create an environment which promotes the development of all three tiers of broadcasting and, in particular, to improve conditions for the development of community media and for the participation of women within the community media framework;

To abolish insult laws that impose drastic restrictions and penalties on journalists;

#### **Call on media outlets, professional associations and industry:**

To raise public awareness about human rights, especially the right to freedom of expression and the right to information;

To publicize the availability of and work to broaden free access to information as a contribution to participation by citizens in public debate;

To commit themselves to report fairly and to develop and respect the highest journalistic standards;

To facilitate the participation in media of underrepresented or marginalized populations and linguistic minorities;

To encourage inclusion of young people in the media and to developing their media and information literacy skills;

To utilize fully the potential of legislation on the right of access to information held by public bodies, for investigative reporting as a means to reinforce the media as public "watchdogs" of the interests of the citizenry;

To promote best practices in community and associative media as well as in national and general interest media outlets;

To improve journalists and other media workers safety and working conditions;

#### **Call on UNESCO**

To sensitize governments, legislators and public institutions on the importance of freedom of expression, including freedom to access, to produce and to share information;

To promote freedom of expression as a universal human right and to facilitate development of general principles and best practices on access to information;

To foster measures for media and information literacy;

To facilitate access to information and communication technologies and infrastructure in developing countries, as

well as the development of all media, including for and by local communities;

To raise awareness among civil society organizations, governments and regulatory bodies, and the general public on the importance of sustainable and pluralistic broadcasting environments;

To use this Declaration as a reference for activities reaffirming UNESCO's status as the United Nations lead agency in communication and information and to promote the Declaration's principles and recommendations in the United Nations system.

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