

**FORUM:** Special Conference on Securing and Advancing Democracy (Sub-Commission One)

**QUESTION OF:** Promoting Free Press as a Pillar of Democracy

**SUBMITTED BY:** South Africa

**CO-SUBMITTERS:** Nigeria, Ethiopia, Swaziland, Mali, Dominican Republic, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Uganda, Israel, Jordan, Sierra Leone, South Korea, Suriname, Tajikistan, Cape Verde

SPECIAL CONFERENCE ON SECURING AND ADVANCING DEMOCRACY,

*Reaffirming* the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and its corollary - press freedom, which is deemed as a basic human right and a definite form of expression; the failure to open free flow of knowledge to the public interferes with the right to access information which are fundamental tenets of a democratic society,

*Noting with regret* the failure of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity to prevent the killing and imprisonment of journalists,

*Disturbed* by the increase in the killings and imprisonment of journalists throughout the world,

*Aware of* the importance of a free, unbiased and unrestricted press in a democracy,

*Acknowledging* the growing trend in politicians and social movements that reject and antagonize journalists and media organisations,

*Recognizing* the growing censorship of press in authoritarian regimes throughout the world,

1. Supports the creation of a UN Declaration of Journalist Rights which will:
  - a) be decided in an international conference which will:
    - i. consist of delegates from any willing Member State
    - ii. include delegates from journalism Non-Governmental Organisations such as but not limited to Reporters Without Borders as observers
  - b) be a document which detail the rights of a journalist in any Member State that signs the Declaration
  - c) create a set of goals that signatories will aim to achieve by 2040;
2. Strongly suggests member states to create a UN Journalistic Training Programme (UNJTP) in Cooperation with the International Center for Journalism that will include:
  - a) safety courses, workshops and privileges for journalists and media workers funded by the UN commission that may include the following:
    - i. discussion of self-protection mechanism, psychological traumatic events and proper use in ways such as seminars and discussion workshops from psychologists
    - ii. ways to encrypt emails or phone calls in order to protect their sources as well as protecting their social media accounts
  - b) providing training to journalists in developing countries by providing/introducing:
    - i. writing classes
    - ii. photography and videography classes
    - iii. investigative journalism courses
    - iv. journalists in developing countries with equipment for journalism;
3. Encourages the creation of a UN Journalism Fact-Checking Organisation (UNJFCO) that will:
  - a) fact check major publications in every Member State by an independent press through:
    - i. conducting basic and surface level fact-checking for news articles
    - ii. conducting more in-depth fact-checking for more controversial and disputed news
    - iii. solely considering factual and statistical authenticity of reporting
  - b) work with local fact-checking Non- Governmental Organizations to provide them with



- standards and ethics without control or interference by the state and within the law
- c) suggestion of guidelines for laws which will protect journalists' safety such as but not limited to:
    - i. basic provisions in national constitutions and laws that guarantee freedom of opinion, freedom of expression and the press, in particular, libel, defamation and insult should be de-criminalized and weighted as a civil offense, with proportionate penalties
    - ii. internet freedom should be promoted and maintained without mandatory blocking or censorship of content or platforms
    - iii. enacting and upholding journalists' employment rights, including the right to organize and join trade unions, which can protect them from arbitrary dismissal and from undue pressures to act in unethical or unprofessional ways
    - iv. ensuring transparency of ownership of media outlets and proper competition rules to prevent monopoly power, market distortions and increased risks of undue pressures on editors and journalists
    - v. abolition of laws giving special protections from criticism to officials or elected political representatives as public figures should accept higher level of criticism than ordinary citizens
    - vi. regulation and supervision of law-enforcement agencies, including police and the prison service, with effective oversight and complaints procedures;
  7. Urges the creation of a Committee for the Prevention of Media Monopolies (CPMM) which will:
    - a) investigate and monitor media ownership in different countries and identify monopolies in media ownership
    - b) have a database where the ownership information can be easily viewed and interpreted by the public
    - c) work to support independent journalists in regions with media monopolies to encourage competition and stop the complete control of one company over the information the people receive
    - d) encourage Member States to pass anti-monopoly and anti-competition laws such as but not limited to:
      - i. regulation and limitation of mergers and buyouts of competing media companies
      - ii. prevention of exclusive dealing;
  8. Invites the creation of a Foreign Press Promotion Program (FPPP) which will:
    - a) monitor how much foreign press is present and accessible in different countries as a measure of different perspectives that are presented to the public and susceptibility to government censorship
    - b) promote the ability to access foreign press in willing Member States by:
      - i. funding the distribution of foreign press in countries where they are not accessible
      - ii. encouraging large media organizations to translate their work into many languages to make them more easily accessible throughout the world
      - iii. compile a list of major press organizations from throughout the world which cover international events and assist them in expanding in different countries.