



A PRESS FOR THE PLANET

JOURNALISM IN THE FACE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

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JOINT STATEMENT

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Santiago de Chile, 3 May 2024 - Thirty years ago, the inaugural World Press Freedom Day was commemorated in Santiago de Chile, marked by the adoption of the historic Santiago Declaration. This event ushered in a new era dedicated to promoting the fundamental right of freedom of expression and press freedom, alongside the promotion of a free, independent, and pluralistic media, building on the United Nations General Assembly's acknowledgement, in 1946, that freedom of information is a fundamental human right.

Today, inspired by the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (2024-2033), proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly, we emphasize the pivotal role of freedom of expression in enabling journalists, media workers, environmental activists, scientists, and citizens to promote the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, and raise awareness about climate change, environmental challenges and degradation, in the pursuit of sustainable development.

In this regard, we emphasize that States have the obligation to respect, protect and promote human rights, including in all actions undertaken to address environmental challenges; and to take measures to protect the human rights of all, as recognized in various international instruments.

Additional measures should also be taken for those particularly vulnerable to environmental degradation, noting the Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment.

Access to accurate and timely information, enabled by a free, independent, and pluralistic media, stands as a cornerstone for raising public awareness, fostering informed debate and decision-making, countering misinformation and disinformation, and ultimately galvanizing collective action towards the attainment of the Goals, in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In this regard, we acknowledge UNESCO's continued commitment to ensure that World Press Freedom Day is a truly multistakeholder and diverse platform, where all relevant actors can raise their voices to protect and promote freedom of expression and achieve sustainable development.

As we navigate the final years to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we call on Member States and all stakeholders to reaffirm their commitments to the fundamental rights of freedom of expression and access to information.

Recognizing the urgent imperative to address climate change, environmental degradation, as well as economic and social challenges that imperil the well-being of present and future generations, we underscore the paramount importance of freedom of expression and access to information in effectively navigating and mitigating these pressing issues. In an era marked by escalating environmental challenges and the triple planetary crises, accompanied by unprecedented levels of mis/disinformation, the media's role as a watchdog, and a catalyst for action cannot be overstated.

On the World Press Freedom Day, we reaffirm our commitment to the safety of journalists, and the defense of freedom of opinion and expression as a fundamental human right. Our ongoing efforts underscore the vital link between press freedom and societies where truth can flourish free from mis- and disinformation. The United Nations Human Rights Council and its Special Procedures rigorously support initiatives that ensure journalists and media workers can work free from harm, recognizing that access to information and the work of journalists and media workers are essential for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We also recognize the role of journalists and media workers, including women, in raising public awareness about climate change, environmental and disaster issues.

The discussions on the occasion of this World Press Freedom Day are important to inform crucial processes, such as the 2024 High-Level political forum on sustainable development, the Summit of the Future, COP29, and other major United Nations conferences.

We further urge Member States to do their utmost to prevent violence, intimidation, threats and attacks against journalists and media workers. We condemn the killings of journalists and media workers everywhere, including in conflict situations. We also strongly condemn any attempts to harass, intimidate, attack, or arbitrarily detain journalists and media workers.

Furthermore, we advocate for the strengthening of policies that promote free, independent, and pluralistic media, thereby fostering a vibrant and robust public sphere, a pillar of peaceful, just, inclusive, sustainable and prosperous societies.

Finally, we emphasize that the improper or malicious design and use of artificial intelligence systems can undermine information integrity, that human rights and fundamental freedoms must be respected, protected, and promoted in this era of artificial intelligence, and further call upon all Member States and other stakeholders to promote safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems in an inclusive and equitable manner, and for the benefit of all.

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