



Multiculturalism

Hamilton Cheng, Strategy Research & Development, Taiwan Public Television Service (PTS)



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Second Public Broadcasters Global Media Summit in Taipei on 8 May.

Delegates from 21 public broadcasters worldwide and related organizations in 18 countries attended this Summit, the biggest side event of the International Public Television (INPUT) Screening Conference. Initiated by the US Independent Television Service (ITVS) in 2005, the INPUT Summit has now expanded into Asia where it is coordinated by Taiwan Public Television Service (PTS).

Diversity

The increase in global investment, immigration, travel, etc. has made the world a smaller place, one in which cultural diversity has become a key phrase in today's society and one which also needs to be at the heart of public service broadcasting.

As the organizer of the Summit, PTS has therefore chosen multiculturalism as the Summit's theme. The reasons for this are twofold: firstly, the concept of multiculturalism plays an important part in the public service's

mission to promote democracy and secondly, important lessons can be learnt when this concept is actively applied – or not – to civil society.

Recent examples illustrate what happens when multiculturalism is not respected. In Taiwan, the 2004 presidential election was alarmingly significant in terms of the development of political allegiances according to ethnicity. However, a more positive example is illustrated in the Rwandan genocide, ten years on: public service broadcasters are playing an important role in the process of democratic transformation by fostering, in particular, peaceful talks between different ethnic groups.

The chairman of PTS and the Summit, Dr Louis Chen said in his welcome speech: “[Our] smaller and closer world may not be as rosy, cosy, friendly and peaceful as we would like it to be. On our home fronts, we have our own unique circumstances created by specific historical courses . . . [T]he

Global Media Summit on multiculturalism is a timely, precious opportunity for us as public broadcasters to reflect on our mission and commitment to democracy. We believe in democratic values and commit ourselves to fostering democratic dialogues and nurturing civil societies.”

After examining the implications of the UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity, Dr Chen encouraged delegates to show their commitment either by supporting or participating in this universal action at a local level. Jean-Bernard Münch, president of SRG SSR idée suisse and former secretary general of the EBU, also rallied to this call at a Summit press conference. He reminded those present that the Convention on the Protection of Diversity, signed last year, highlighted the particular role of public service broadcasters in order to achieve the goals of the Convention. Mr Münch expressed his hope that this local initiative would gather support so that most countries could shortly ratify the Convention.

Definition

Though the participants at the Summit acknowledge that every society has its own definition and approach to cultural diversity and

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multiculturalism, the Summit provides an opportunity to learn and share the experiences of colleagues worldwide. Therefore, a North-East Asian colleague promotes the international cultural exchange programme, a Singaporean delegate gains a greater insight by hearing of the experience from a South African broadcaster; the Scandinavian delegate who provides the video clips of a multiculturalism programme creates a great deal of enthusiasm and excitement in other participants; and so on.

Following the closing remarks of David Brugger, former president of America's Public Television Stations (APTS) and an old veteran of public service broadcasting, the Summit ended in a climax with all the delegates signing a unilaterally agreed statement emphasizing their acknowledgement of the importance of cultural diversity:

"We, the undersigned, recognize that cultural diversity is a defining





characteristic of humanity and that each society is made up of unique cultural features and experiences. In many corners of the globe, sympathy, understanding and trust are in desperate need – not just for the appreciation of cultural diversity, but more importantly for living a just and peaceful life in a multicultural environment. As leaders of public broadcasting organizations, it is our belief that mutual respect derives from democratic dialogue and that can be nurtured by the media. Using media expertise and resources, we therefore

resolve to promote cultural diversity within democracy and to contribute to mutual understanding and trust in the domestic and international spheres, in the hope that our societies and fellow citizens will benefit from our efforts and further fulfil the democratic way of life.”

Delegates who signed the statement included: 8 members of the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association; 7 members of the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union, 4 active members of the European Broad-

casting Union, 3 members of the Southern Africa Broadcasting Association, 4 media professionals based in North America, and non-affiliated broadcaster Maori Television (New Zealand).

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