



18 November 2011

## The WEMF V Accra Declaration

The World Electronic Media Forum, organised by the world's broadcasting unions (the WBU), and hosted by the African Union of Broadcasters, met in Accra, Ghana on 16-18 November 2011. The need for appropriate training was a recurring theme in much of the discussions. The Forum concluded the following.

1. **The transition of television to digital** is inevitable for all nations, developed and developing, driven forward by the public demand for more channels, the financial opportunity available for governments for released spectrum, and the declining availability of certain analogue TV equipment for production. The transition is, or will be, no simple matter. It calls for extensive planning, digital expertise, and cost with no increase in revenue. Furthermore, broadcasters and governments must keep in mind the future needs of terrestrial broadcasting. They must also remember that, taken overall, the greatest part of the transition costs is borne collectively by the public.
2. **The development of a news and exchange network for Africa**, AUB MENOS, is a truly important and momentous development for Africa, and for broadcasting. The network will inter-connect Africa's national broadcasters, allowing them to exchange news and other content. African content will also be more readily available to the outside world. The network will open a window on Africa for the rest of the world, and help Africans to share their destiny. The project is practically supported by the ITU and strongly encouraged by other broadcasting unions.
3. **The tools for making television and radio programmes** have shown astounding evolution in recent years. Cameras, editing, and contribution equipment have reduced in size and cost beyond recognition. Broadcasters need to be increasingly budgeting conscious, and need to seize the opportunities presented by this new equipment. Production and primary distribution of content

can be done, at high quality, on what is close to 'commodity equipment'. However, a key to making successful use of the new age is good training, and a continuing awareness of the professionalism needed to make good television. In regions where available, using publicly available Internet for backhaul can bring dramatic cost savings. It was also noted that the transition from SD to digital HD broadcasting, in cases where this is planned, may best be accomplished by moving straight to file based HDTV production.

4. It is acknowledged that the **unchecked and rising energy consumption of the planet as a whole is a major contributing factor to climate change**. The public must be made aware of the factual scientific evidence in an understandable and interesting way, and broadcasters are urged to take on the task of doing so. The public must also be encouraged to take steps of their own to conserve energy. Broadcasters and those that make consumer equipment, must act as an example to the world in their own approach to 'green' programme production and distribution.
5. **User Generated Content** has the capacity both to reflect social change **and** to create social change, as the Arab spring and other events illustrate. The world needs to understand and help shape the inter-relationship between citizen journalism and professional journalism. Two elements are clear. The first is that there is a need for training to be included in education systems (for young people) to ensure media literacy – and here UNESCO's role will be important. The second is that there is a need for life-long learning (by us all) on how to manage and understand the increasing information flow that the information society is providing.
6. As audio and video tapes decay in **neglected archives**, much of Africa's audiovisual heritage is at risk of being lost forever. The broadcasters need knowledge, skills and resources to future-proof irreplaceable cultural and historical archives - and to release them for future programming and as generators of revenue. Support and solidarity are needed within the African Union of Broadcasters, between the AUB and its sister unions, and from international agencies such as UNESCO. Governments should provide funds to preserve their country's history and culture, as represented in broadcasters' archives. As far as they can, broadcasters should identify their most important material to be digitized. By mid-2012, the broadcasting unions will compile a catalogue of old but still-working equipment able to play older archive material into safe new digital formats.
7. **Public trust is the most important asset that broadcasters have**. It is imperative that this trust is earned and maintained by the media practitioners. Among the factors that negatively impact public trust, and result in a lack of confidence, are biased reporting, intrusion of privacy, conflict of interest, unprofessional practices, government interference, and insensitivity to public

opinion. Among the measures that could be taken to ensure public trust in the media are instituting a transparent editorial code of practice<sup>1</sup>, examining critical comments and carrying out timely corrections, encouraging audience engagement and continually training editorial staff. It is also helpful to audit the editorial practices that are followed within media organizations.

8. The part played by journalists in society is essentially to make society 'a better place'. Journalists must strive to contribute to this goal as best they can, following the rules of their profession. The rules of Journalism must apply whatever medium is being used to reach the public. We must not under-estimate the need for adequate training for journalism, and such training must be valued as much as medical training is for doctors. We can define a first level **code of ethics for journalists in all media**: 1. seek the truth and report it. 2. Minimize harm (the reporting might cause) 3. Be independent, and 4. Be accountable. We also need to recognize that the media is about a 'dialogue', and in such dialogue we must always be prepared to move away from our comfort zone of assumptions. Only in this way will there be a true 'dialogue'.

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<sup>1</sup> The WBU may have a role in providing such codes of conduct.