



The Carthage Declaration 3 May 2012

We, the participants at the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day conference in Carthage, Tunisia, 3-5 May 2012:

Meeting in the cradle of the Arab Spring and considering that freedom of opinion and expression are essential for open, free and democratic societies;

Recalling Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 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”;

Honouring the journalists, media workers and social media producers who contribute to media freedom through public-interest journalism, often risking their lives and personal security in the process;

Recognising that freedom of speech across all media platforms, including both on and offline, enables the free flow of information by word and image, as stated in the UNESCO Constitution;

Observing how social media, combined with other media, can help bring about unprecedented freedom of expression and democratic transformation;

Believing that the combination of freedom of expression, press freedom, access to information and Internet connectivity is central to contemporary democracy, development and sustainable economic growth;

Stressing the importance of ethics in journalism by professionals and by citizen journalists as a key factor in revealing untruths, promoting human rights, combatting intolerance, exposing corruption and counteracting authoritarianism;

Noting the Report to the Human Rights Council of 2011 by the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Opinion and Expression with respect to access to Internet and the right of all individuals to freedom of expression, including through the Internet (A/HRC/17/27);

Acknowledging the principles and recommendations of the previous World Press Freedom Day Declarations, in particular the Washington Declaration on 21st Century Media: New Frontiers, New Barriers and the Maputo Declaration on Freedom of Expression, Access to Information and Empowerment of People;

Welcoming the UN Inter-Agency Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity endorsed by the UN Chief Executives Board on 13 April 2012, with the aim of creating a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers in both conflict and non-conflict situations;

Understanding that the 2012 World Press Freedom Day takes place at an historical juncture, when it is important to consolidate the culture, law and journalistic practices that are essential to protect hard-won freedoms.

Call on all stakeholders:

To create and strengthen the environment for free, editorially independent and pluralistic media, including in countries in transition toward democracy;

To help ensure that the media system as a whole serves the needs of a society by reflecting its diversity of political views, cultures, languages, and beliefs;

To encourage financial and development institutions and other stakeholders to take account of press freedom in their development of policies and programmes;

To create a free and safe environment for journalists, media workers and social media producers to produce information through traditional or new media, and

to support implementation of the UN Plan of Action on The Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity;

To support initiatives to promote good governance in media and professional standards in journalism, as well as voluntary ethical practices, including for citizen journalism;

To promote user-generated content and citizen participation in media, making use of relevant UNESCO guidelines;

To empower women and youth to participate in mass communications;

To promote access to internet and encourage media and information literacy to empower citizens to seek, evaluate, use and create information to participate in decisions about their economic, social and cultural context;

To further encourage widespread annual observance of World Press Freedom Day (3 May) as well as Right to Know Day (28 September) and Day of Action Against Impunity (23 November).

Call on UNESCO Member States:

To reaffirm and implement their commitments to international standards on freedom of expression, including Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and recognize the relevance of this right for citizens' participation in all forms of media in the development of their societies and particularly in transformation toward democracy;

To develop and implement policies that promote media pluralism and avoid undue concentration of media ownership, whilst also supporting equitable access to means of communication and bridging digital divides;

To guarantee in law the independence of media regulatory bodies and their role in promoting media diversity, as well as ensuring that appointments of and within these bodies are transparent and based exclusively on competence;

To promote a diverse media landscape that recognises the distinctive contribution to democracy by all three tiers of broadcasters – public service, community and commercial;

To transform state and government media into public service media outlets with guarantees for full independence; including inserting this principle in the constitutions of societies in democratic transition;

To ensure that both state assistance to media and public-funded advertising are distributed through a transparent and accountable process, and not used as a tool to reward or punish media on political grounds;

To enact and implement access to information laws, and provide adequate resources that permit increased access to information held by governments, thus enhancing transparency and accountability of public bodies as well as institutions which perform public functions and/or use public funds and resources;

To repeal criminal defamation laws and unreasonable secrecy laws;

To ensure thorough and independent judicial investigations into cases of violence and killings of journalists and to inform the Director General of UNESCO in line with the 2012 IPDC Decision on The Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity;

To train security forces to interact positively with media professionals, especially during peaceful demonstrations and civic protests.

Call on Professional Associations, Media Outlets, Industry and Social Media Practitioners:

To ensure quality, independent and pluralistic information by applying high professional and ethical standards and avoiding undue influence by economic, political and other actors;

To promote the establishment of mechanisms for transparency, good governance and accountability within media outlets and industry, particularly concerning ownership as well as financial and political interests;

To facilitate a culture among media professionals and social media practitioners of independent, voluntary and credible self-regulation as a means to build public trust in media and journalism, including social media;

To work with civil society in order to support and monitor media independence, pluralism and diversity, as well as transparency of official institutions and implementation of government policies where they have an impact on freedom of expression.

Call on UNESCO:

To make this Declaration widely available to Member States and to other international and regional organizations, professional associations, media outlets and NGOs;

To continue to combat impunity, particularly by implementing the UN inter-agency Plan of Action on The Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity;

To continue to request Member States to report on the status of investigation of cases of violence against media personnel and others contributing to public interest journalism, and ensure the transparency of this reporting;

To coordinate dialogue among Member States and other stakeholders on the human rights implications of social networks and new media for freedom of expression, privacy, and personal data protection;

To use this Declaration as a reference for UNESCO's activities in the field of freedom of expression.

Call on World Press Freedom Day 2012 partners:

To draw from the successful experience of multi-stakeholder co-operation in the organization of World Press Freedom Day 2012, and to resolve to work together in future activities for further strengthening of press freedom and freedom of expression as universal values and benefits for global society.