

Joint Statement on the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day on 3 May Celebrating 30 Years of the Windhoek Declaration for the Development of a Free, Independent and Pluralistic Press

Issued by the Chairs of the Groups of Friends on the Safety of Journalists and members of the Groups of Friends in Paris (UNESCO), New York (United Nations), Geneva (United Nations), Vienna (OSCE) and Strasbourg (Council of Europe) listed in the annex

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration for the Development of a Free, Independent and Pluralistic Press, we pay tribute to the African newspaper journalists who met in Windhoek, Namibia in 1991 and produced a statement of press freedom principles. The Windhoek Declaration has been influential for 30 years as a catalyst in the process of encouraging press freedom, independent journalism and media pluralism worldwide. Endorsed by the 25th UNESCO General Conference, this landmark document marked the beginning of the international commitment to address the need to foster an enabling environment for journalists and media workers to exercise their freedom of expression and for them to make their crucial contributions to consolidating democracy and enhancing sustainable development. It gave rise to the World Press Freedom Day, celebrated on 3rd May each year, proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 1993 and the Guillermo Cano Prize in 1997 as well inspired further regional declarations, such as the Declaration of Alma Ata in Kazakhstan in 1992, the Declaration of Santiago de Chile in 1994 and the Declaration of Sana'a in Yemen in 1996 and finally, in 1997, the Declaration of Sofia, all of them supporting unreservedly the principles enshrined in the Windhoek Declaration. These principles are still valid today, 30 years after their adoption and their implementation constitutes a foundation for the safety of journalists, online and offline.

Underpinning the Windhoek Declaration is the premise that access to reliable and verifiable information is a public good and that those contributing to this end should be protected not only for the guarantee of their own rights but for the good of society as a whole. In this context, we would like to underline the importance of addressing sexual and gender-based violence and abuse, both online and offline, as it can result in deepening existing gender-related inequalities in the public space and impact negatively on pluralism. The Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals, endorsed by all UN member states, acknowledges that the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as of access to universal and reliable information are an integral part of sustainable development and the principle of "leaving no one behind". Among other aspects, the COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated the crucial need for access to reliable, trustworthy and fact-based information, as well as the key role of free, independent and pluralistic media to enhance transparency, accountability and trust, and to address the challenges of misinformation and disinformation.

This year's world press freedom day focuses on "information as a public good". By defending and promoting media freedom and the safety of journalists, we defend and promote the right to freedom of expression, including the right of the individual to seek, receive and impart information of all kinds. Free, independent and pluralistic media depend on the safety of journalists and an enabling environment for access to information. It is of utmost importance to address impunity for crimes against journalists and media workers, both online and offline, through an effective judicial

process and accountability. Independent journalism and media pluralism are only possible where conditions exist for their economic viability and sustainability. Ensuring the transparency and the accountability of internet platforms constitute growing challenges in the age of digitalisation and rapid technological change.

A healthy media system does not exclusively depend on governments whose responsibility is to protect freedom of expression. It is also built on multi-stakeholder cooperation, including the private sector, civil society and individuals of all ages who consume information from different sources in order to make informed decisions in their daily lives.

Enhancing media and information literacy globally is thus crucial for empowering individuals to navigate the modern information environment taking full advantage of the many opportunities offered by the digital ecosystem. It also enables them to mitigate the risks, such as disinformation and misinformation, incitement to hatred and violence, racism and sexual and gender-based violence, in accordance with the right to freedom of opinion and expression, media independence and pluralism.

It is in the spirit of Windhoek, that we are determined to reinforce the safeguards of a free, independent and pluralistic media highlighted by the Windhoek Declaration while developing new policies and initiatives that will equip us to better protect journalism, promote the safety of journalists and media workers and access to information as a public good.

Annex: (List of co-signatories, members in any of the five Groups of Friends on the Safety of Journalists at UNESCO in Paris, the United Nations in New York and Geneva, the OSCE in Vienna and the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, in alphabetical order)

Albania	Latvia
Argentina	Lebanon
Australia	Liechtenstein
Austria	Lithuania
Botswana	Luxembourg
Brazil	Montenegro
Bulgaria	Morocco
Canada	The Netherlands
Cape Verde	Norway
Chile	Paraguay
Colombia	Poland
Costa Rica	Qatar
Denmark	Republic of Korea
Estonia	Russian Federation
Finland	Senegal
France	Slovenia
Germany	Sweden
Ghana	Switzerland
Greece	Tunisia
Japan	United Kingdom
Jordan	United States
Kenya	Uruguay
Kuwait	