



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

**Closing remarks by Getachew Engida, Deputy
Director-General of UNESCO**

**on the occasion of the Conference on
“News Organizations Standing up for the Safety of
Media Professionals”**

Paris, 5 February

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear friends

We have reached the close of an important day of deliberations.

More than 300 of you have come to UNESCO today from over 50 countries around the world, representing media owners, directors, editors-in-chief, and civil society and industry partners. It has been an opportunity for you to exchange, and for our Member States to hear first hand.

We have been here together for one purpose: to provide media leaders a platform, and for us all to stand up for the safety of journalists.

Today, a number of messages have come through:

We have heard moving evidence about the increasing dangers that journalists face in today's world – the rise in attacks, harassment, kidnapping, torture and killings.

Freelance and local journalists are often at the greatest risk – lacking timely pay, insurance, legal and psychological support

New digital threats and online harassment have emerged, particularly against women journalists.

As Douglas Jehl observed: journalists are now being attacked not just for what they write, but for what they represent.

This morning's speakers pointed to a "collective failure" to ensure the safety of journalists.

Governments must do more. The UN must do more. Civil society must do more. And the media industry must do more.

I encourage you to take forward the innovative solutions and best practices shared today.

Media organizations can and must:

Provide safety training to all journalists, staff and freelancers, including on physical and digital safety, and with special attention to women journalists;

Establish clear habits, routines, protocols and systems to enhance safety. Make informed decisions about when a story is worth the risk.

Raise visibility for attacks against journalists and impunity for these crimes.

Develop solidarity with other media organizations in your countries in this effort – the example we heard this morning from Pakistan can serve as inspiration for a way forward.

As called for by Reporters without Borders and others UNESCO supports the establishment of a UN Special Representative for the Safety of journalists.

Impunity can be combatted – as we heard from Serbia.

Join the UN Plan of Action to work with the UN, Governments and civil society in these efforts.

Dialogues with government, the judiciary and security forces have a role to play, as in South Sudan.

Be assured that for UNESCO, we will continue putting focus on this key issue. Coming up soon is World Press Freedom Day, 3 May.

This year our global event will be in Helsinki, Finland, and it will build on the insights of last year's global event in Riga, Latvia. We encourage you all to use the day in your own countries to take forward the discussion.

The sharing of views here today at UNESCO, on a global scale, is something that can be replicated at country level – even before World Press Freedom Day.

Talking is not a guarantee of agreement, or of practical solutions. But without talking, nothing can be done.

The UN Plan provides a basis for media leaders to talk with all other actors, and UNESCO is there to support this.

Conclusion

Our work is only beginning. As mentioned earlier, a small group of industry leaders will meet tomorrow to discuss the recommendations of today's event, and concrete steps that media organizations can take forward.

In closing, I would like to once again thank those who made today's meeting possible:

Thank you to our co-convenors, the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers and the International Federation of Journalists.

Our thanks also go to our partners, the International Women's Media Foundation, the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, the European Broadcasting Union, and the International Press Institute.

We are also deeply grateful for the support of the Governments of Australia, Austria, Finland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Sweden, United States of America and to all those Member States that have contributed to the International Programme to the Development of Communication.

Thanks also to the Open Society Foundations and Al Jazeera for their support. Your support has allowed the participation of media professionals from around the world, making this a truly global event.

Special thanks go to our Goodwill Ambassador Christiane Amanpour and Zeinab Badawi for giving their precious time to moderate our debates.

Finally, thank you to all those present today for your continued efforts to create a world where media professionals can work freely and in safety, serving the world with the information upon which we all depend.