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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC)

The Safety of Journalists and The Issue of Impunity

Introduction

by

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22 March 2012

Ladies and gentlemen,

Over the last decade, more than 500 journalists and media workers have been killed worldwide with many more wounded while carrying out their professional responsibilities. Most were not even working in a conflict zone.

The safety of journalists is essential to protect the right of all citizens to reliable information and the right of journalists to provide it without fearing for their security. A safe environment should therefore be guaranteed.

It is an obligation of the State and of the society to create and maintain the conditions needed for the fundamental human right to freedom of expression.

UNESCO is committed to take action to promote the safety of journalists and to end impunity for attacks against them.

Often in collaboration with other organizations, UNESCO has taken a number of decisive actions for supporting safety training courses and workshops for journalists and media workers worldwide, creating awareness-raising campaigns and advocating with Member States to end impunity on crimes against journalists and media workers.

UNESCO has also enriched the international legal field by endorsing resolutions and declarations that have been in some cases catalysts for the advancement of a climate where journalists are safe and consequently citizens find it easier to access quality information.

The International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) has in recent years assumed a crucial role in promoting the safety of journalists and combating impunity. The Intergovernmental Council has, since 2008, requested the Director-General to carry out a biennial report based on her condemnations of the killings of journalists and media workers. This report should also include updated information on the basis of responses received, on a

voluntary basis, from Member States concerned by these killings of journalists.

This year the presentation of this report include an new document: the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

In 2010, the IPDC Council unanimously adopted the second Decision on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. This Decision additionally requested “the Director-General of UNESCO to consult with Member States on the feasibility of convening an inter-agency meeting of all the relevant UN agencies with a view to formulating a comprehensive, coherent, and action-oriented approach to the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity.”

On the basis of the responses received following a consultation with Member States, the Director-General of UNESCO, organized the first UN Inter-Agency Meeting on The Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, which took place at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in 13-14 September 2011. Representatives of United Nations agencies, programmes and funds met at UNESCO to draft an Action

Plan to improve the safety of journalists and combat impunity.

The Meeting brought together a wide range of international and regional institutions, professional organizations, NGOs and Member States to provide the UN family with recommendations to formulate a coherent and results-oriented UN plan of action on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity.

This final draft Plan is the result of the process started at the UN Inter-Agency Meeting on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

It constitutes an example of how United Nations can ensure better implementation of existing standards for the protection of journalists and how we can more effectively address the issue of impunity.

This plan has been presented to the United Nations Systems' High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) and it will be presented at the UN Systems Chief Executives Board in its next meeting in April 2012.

We are currently in planning for a follow-up Inter-Agency conference in Vienna in November, with the support of Austria, and this will be an opportunity to move from Action Plan to Work Plan, and a time to incorporate valuable suggestions from Member States.

I will present it to you now (in power point) for its discussion. Its endorsement will be asked at the end of the session along with the IPDC Decision on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

Thank you

Jānis Kārklīņš