

53rd Meeting of the IPDC Bureau

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris
23-25 February 2009

Opening Remarks by Mr Wijayananda Jayaweera, Director, Communication Development Division, representing Mr Abdul Waheed Khan, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Members of the Bureau,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the 53rd Meeting of the Bureau of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC). I will be representing Mr Abdul Waheed Khan, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information during this meeting, who asked me to convey to you his sincere regrets for his absence today due to a mission to Bahrain.

Since the last IPDC Bureau meeting in 2008, UNESCO has pursued its efforts to promote media environments characterized by freedom of expression, pluralism, diversity and professionalism. I would like to begin by highlighting the actions undertaken with regard to the two decisions adopted by the IPDC intergovernmental Council at its last session in March 2008. The first concerns Media Development Indicators while the second concerns Journalists' Safety and the Danger of Impunity.

As you may recall, the IPDC Council endorsed the **Media Development Indicators (MDIs)** as an “important diagnostic tool for all stakeholders to assess the level of media development in a given country”. The MDIs define a framework within which the media can best contribute to, and benefit from, good governance and democratic development. They have been widely acknowledged by major actors in the media development field,

including UNDP, the World Bank and the Council of Europe (Resolution 1637, 03 October 2008), and translated into French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Sinhali and Tamil.

Since their endorsement, UNESCO has launched a process of applying the indicators in selected countries in order to complete comprehensive assessments of their respective national media landscapes. The Organization is currently supporting the University of Zagreb in carrying out such an evaluation of Croatia's media sector. I was invited to a review meeting last month in Zagreb and was very satisfied both with the progress that has been made so far and with the professional manner in which the assessment is being conducted. The finalized study will be discussed during a national multistakeholder seminar to be held in September 2009 and a summary report will be submitted by Croatia to the IPDC Council in March 2010.

UNESCO plans to launch a similar assessment of Mozambique's media landscape, at the country's official request. UNESCO has issued a request for proposals from qualified independent national research institutions and local media development organizations to implement the project. Ideally, the Organization would like to support a journalism department in a reputed university in order to enable it to become a national assessment centre on media development.

UNESCO is seeking additional resources for the application of the Media Development Indicators in other countries. The Organization is also pushing for the integration of the MDIs in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in the fields of media development and good governance.

One of the key difficulties encountered by many Member States in applying the indicators is the lack of reliable data sets to make informed assessments. In an attempt to address this problem, the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) is currently devising a methodology for qualitative and quantitative data collection to facilitate the concrete application of the MDIs. The Institute has hired a team of consultants to elaborate recommendations in this area in order to operationalize the Media Indicators Development framework. In view of validating the outcomes of this exercise, UIS is

planning an Expert Group Meeting in New Delhi, India from 1 to 3 April 2009 for the Asia-Pacific region, and another one towards the end of the year in San José, Costa Rica for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Regarding the IPDC Council's second decision on the **safety of journalists** and the issue of impunity, steps have been taken to send an official letter to the governments of those countries concerned with the assassinations of journalists condemned by UNESCO's Director-General for the 2006-2007 period, requesting them to provide information on their investigations into these crimes. The collection and verification of data is expected to be completed by the end of the year. An analytical report will be prepared on the basis of the responses received and submitted to the Council at its 27th session in March 2010. In 2008, while the number of journalist killings condemned by the Director-General was lower than in previous years, it was still unacceptably high, reaching 46 assassinations.

Distinguished Delegates,

During the last year, UNESCO has been involved in a wide range of other activities contributing to the achievement of IPDC's three main priorities, namely (i) promoting freedom of expression, (ii) developing community media and (iii) professional capacity building.

As regards the first priority, UNESCO's celebration of **World Press Freedom Day** in Maputo, Mozambique on 3 May 2008 provided the opportunity to remind people of the importance of freedom of expression as a fundamental human right enshrined in Article 19 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. It focused in particular on how press freedom and access to information feed into the wider development objective of empowering people. Some 150 media professionals from around the world adopted a declaration emphasizing the importance of open government, transparency, accountability and public access to information.

Regarding the **development of community media**, I wish to draw your attention to the fact that during the recent general election in Bangladesh, the winning party made an explicit pledge in its election manifesto to develop enabling policies for community radio. Well ahead of this declaration, UNESCO supported a number of civil society organizations in the country to establish an informed dialogue with the political parties.

Earlier this month, we organized an Experts' Consultative Meeting on Good Practices in Community Media here at Headquarters, during which participants concluded that community media are most effective when they are established as independent, civil society-based media initiatives that assure the participation of communities at all levels. The Expert Group advised us to undertake two studies: one of country-level enabling environments for community media in view of proposing a set of principles of good practice in policy, law and regulation in this area; and a second of the impact of community media on social cohesion and sustainable development.

With respect to professional capacity building, following the meeting organized by UNESCO in March 2008 in Grahamstown, South Africa aimed at boosting the capacities of African journalism schools, the Organization has facilitated exchange programmes, partnerships, networking and twinning initiatives on a regional and international level. A number of the twelve potential **centres of excellence in journalism training** identified in the UNESCO study on "Criteria and Indicators for Quality Journalism Training Institutions: Identifying Potential Centres of Excellence in Journalism Training in Africa" have received support from UNESCO and donor agencies.

I am also pleased to announce to you that almost 20 journalism training institutions from Asia and the Pacific, the Caribbean, Africa and the Arab States have agreed to adopt the **model journalism education curricula** developed by UNESCO in 2007.

Finally, UNESCO pioneered the development of a universal model of **teacher training curriculum for media and information literacy**. An international Expert Group

meeting was organized from 16-18 June 2008 at UNESCO HQ to elaborate such a curriculum and enrich material to be introduced in school teachers' training worldwide.

All of these activities have strengthened UNESCO's contribution to the **follow-up of the World Summit on the Information Society** and specifically to Action Line C9 "Media", for which the Organization was designated as main facilitator.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you can see, the year that has passed since we last met in April 2008 has been a busy one for UNESCO. What I have tried to convey in my presentation is that IPDC's activities do not stand alone but are to a great extent intertwined with the regular activities of the UNESCO Communication and Information Sector. In this sense, IPDC is a vital programme that contributes directly to the objectives of UNESCO's Regular Programme in the field of media development, just as the Regular Programme amplifies and extends the impact of some of the projects carried out within the framework of IPDC.

I therefore hope that IPDC will be able to count on your continued support.

I wish you fruitful discussions over these next three days. Thank you for your attention.