

DECISION ON THE SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS AND THE ISSUE OF IMPUNITY

Adopted by the IPDC Intergovernmental Council
at its 27th session (UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, 24-26 March 2010)

The Intergovernmental Council of the IPDC,

Having discussed the report on the killing of journalists condemned by the Director-General of UNESCO during the 2008-2009 period;

Recalling Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that “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”;

Recalling UNESCO Resolution 29 “Condemnation of Violence Against Journalists” adopted by the UNESCO General Conference at its 29th session on 12 November 1997, which called on Member States to remove any statute of limitations on crimes against persons when such crimes are “perpetrated to prevent the exercise of freedom of information and expression or when their purpose is the obstruction of justice” and which urged governments to “refine legislation to make it possible to prosecute and sentence those who instigate the assassination of persons exercising the right to freedom of expression” ;

Deeply concerned by the increased frequency of acts of violence against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in many parts of the world, including in countries which are not considered as conflict areas;

Recalling Resolution 1738 adopted by the UN Security Council at its 5613th Meeting on 23 December 2006 in which the Security Council:

- ***condemned*** “intentional attacks against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel, as such, in situations of armed conflict, and called upon all parties to put an end to such practices”;

- ***drew attention*** to “the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, in particular the Third Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 on the treatment of prisoners of war, and the Additional Protocols of 8 June 1977, in particular article 79 of the Additional Protocol I regarding the protection of journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict”;

- ***emphasized*** “the responsibility of States to comply with the relevant obligations under international law to end impunity and to prosecute those responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law”;

- ***requested*** “the Secretary-General to include as a sub-item in his next reports on the protection of civilians in armed conflict the issue of the safety and security of journalists, media professionals and associated personnel”;

Underlining the importance for journalists, media personnel and media organizations to uphold the principles of neutrality, impartiality and humanity in their professional activities;

Appreciating the actions taken by Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, the Republic of Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Kyrgyz Republic, Lebanon, the Union of Myanmar, the Palestinian Authority, the Republic of Philippines, the Russian Federation and Turkey to provide the Director-General of UNESCO with information on the judicial follow-up of the killings of journalists in 2006-2007;

Urges all Member States that have not yet responded to the Director-General’s request to provide information on the judicial follow-up to the killings of journalists condemned by UNESCO Director-General in 2006-2007;

Requests all Member States concerned by the Director-General’s condemnations of the deliberate killings of journalists during the 2008-2009 period:

(a) to comply with the relevant obligations under international law to end impunity and to prosecute those responsible for violations, where effective actions have not been taken;

(b) to inform the Director-General of UNESCO, on a voluntary basis, of the actions taken to prevent the impunity of the perpetrators and to notify her of the status of the judicial inquiries conducted on each of the killings condemned by UNESCO;

Invites the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Council of the IPDC to explore how appropriate projects that support local capacity building in safety of journalists can be given priority;

Requests the General Conference of UNESCO to encourage news rooms to observe one minute’s silence every year on World Press Freedom Day (3 May) to denounce the murders of journalists and to demand end to impunity.

Requests the Director-General of UNESCO to provide the Intergovernmental Council of the IPDC at its 28th session with an analytical report that will be made widely available. Such a report shall also draw upon responses received from Member States, in the form of a list of those countries contacted with an indication of those that have responded and those that have not. This report shall

include updated information on the Director-General's condemnations of the killing of journalists.

Requests the Director-General of UNESCO to consult with Member States on the feasibility of convening an inter-agency meeting of all 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.