



## **Remarks by the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Kiki Gbeho**

**World Press Freedom Day 2016**

**10<sup>th</sup> of May 2016**

- Director of Ceremonies
- Deputy Minister of Information and Communication Technology, Honourable Stanley Simataa;
- UNESCO Windhoek Head of Office, Dr. Jean-Pierre Ilboudo;
- EU Ambassador to Namibia, Her Excellency Jana Hybaskova;
- Chairperson of the Editors Forum of Namibia, Mr. Joseph Ailonga;
- Acting Secretary General for the Namibia National Commission for UNESCO, Mr. Rod April;
- UN Country Team members present;

- Senior Government Officials;
- Ladies and gentlemen

I feel privileged to be a part of the 2016 World Press Freedom Day celebrations, here this morning.

Today I will deliver two messages. I will deliver a message on behalf of the UNESCO Director General, Ms. Irina Bokova, followed by the message of the UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki Moon.

But before I read these messages, I would like to, say a few words on behalf of the United Nations Country Team in Namibia.

World Press Freedom Day is celebrated across the globe annually and provides an opportunity to advance the principles of press freedom and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

This year's celebrations are very special, first, because they coincide with the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on Press Freedom;

Second because Windhoek hosted the conference where the declaration was adopted;

And third because Namibia is ranked number 1 in Africa and number 17 globally in terms of press freedom.

For this Namibia must be congratulated and we encourage the Government and the media to continue along this path.

This year's celebrations are also special because the ambitious new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that have ending poverty and saving the planet at their core have just been adopted (2015).

The SDGs have set the world's global development agenda, will assist in forming policy decisions, will impact resource mobilization and flows, and most important will focus us on ensuring that no one is left behind.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Press freedom and the right to information are directly relevant to this agenda. In fact it will be hard to achieve these development goals without them.

For this reason the UN system in Namibia looks forward to partnering with the media, in support of Government, to wage war on poverty and to implement the Harambee Prosperity Plan.

We therefore urge the media to strive towards guiding an open and informed debate. And Twenty five years on from the declaration that ushered in the observance of WPF, let us be reminded of the importance of upholding the right of every woman, man and child to freedom of expression; if poverty is to be eradicated and we are to achieve prosperity for all.

***Allow me now to read my first message on behalf of the UNESCO Director General, Ms, Irina Bokova.***

**Message from Ms Irina Bokova,  
Director-General of UNESCO,  
on the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day**

Access to Information is a fundamental freedom and part of the basic human right to freedom of expression. Receiving and imparting information, both offline and online, is a cornerstone of democracy, good governance, and rule of law.

Last year, the world agreed on the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* to guide all efforts over the new fifteen years, to end poverty, to protect the planet, and to ensure prosperity and lasting peace for all. The new Sustainable Development Goals include a target on public access to information and the protection of fundamental freedoms -- two interrelated objectives that are key accelerators of progress across all of the new agenda.

At this time of turbulence and change across the world, including new challenges that require global cooperation and action, the need for quality information has never been so important – this requires a strong environment of

press freedom and well-functioning systems to ensure the people's right to know.

Two hundred and fifty years ago, the first formal Right to Information legislation was enacted in what is today Sweden and Finland. A historical breakthrough at the time, this still provides inspiration today, as Governments increasingly adopt laws that allow public access to information. Twenty-five years ago, in then newly-independent Namibia, the historic *Windhoek Declaration on Press Freedom* was adopted, paving the way to recognition by the United Nations of *World Press Freedom Day*.

In marking these anniversaries, *World Press Freedom Day* this year highlights the importance of free and independent journalism for advancing the 2030 Agenda. This includes the safety of journalists, at a time when, tragically, a media professional is killed every five days. This cannot stand, and guided by the *UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity*, UNESCO is working with Governments around the world to create a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers everywhere.

In this spirit, I call on everyone to stand united in defending and encouraging press freedom and the right to access to information. This is essential for human rights and dignity, for our aspirations for sustainable development, for common determination to build lasting peace.

*This Is Your Right!*

***I now wish to conclude by conveying to you the message of the UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki Moon.***

**Secretary-General's message on World Press Freedom Day (New York)**

Human rights, democratic societies and sustainable development depend on the free flow of information. And the right to information depends on press freedom. Each year, we observe World Press Freedom Day to emphasize these fundamental principles, to protect the independence of the media and to honour media workers who risk and have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession.

This year, World Press Freedom Day coincides with three important milestones. It is the 250th anniversary of the world's first freedom of information law, covering both modern-day Sweden and Finland, and it is the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Windhoek Declaration of press freedom principles. Finally, 2016 is also the first year of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Press freedom and the free flow of information are necessary not only to inform citizens about the Goals, but to enable them to hold their leaders accountable for fulfilling the pledges they have made. The media – including, and increasingly, new online media -- serve as our eyes and ears. We all benefit from the information they provide.

A free, independent and safe media environment is essential. Yet, all too often, journalists are threatened, harassed, obstructed or even killed in the pursuit of information. Many languish in detention, some in appalling conditions, for shedding light on governance failures, corporate malfeasance or societal problems.

I am very concerned about the increasingly restrictive environment for media workers in many



countries. Constraints on freedom of expression place shackles on progress itself. On this World Press Freedom Day, I urge all Governments, politicians, businesses and citizens to commit to nurturing and protecting an independent, free media. Without this fundamental right, people are less free and less empowered. With it, we can work together for a world of dignity and opportunity for all.

**Thank you**