



Remarks by:

United Nations Resident Coordinator

Ms. Kiki Gbeho

World Press Freedom Day,

10 May 2017,

Nampower Convention Centre,

Windhoek

Your Excellency, the President of the Republic of Namibia,
Dr. Hage G. Geingob

Hon. Tjekero Tweya, Minister of Information
Communication and Technology

Deputy Ministers & Senior Government Officials

Ms. Jana Hybaskova, European Union Ambassador to
Namibia

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

My Colleagues from the United Nations Country Team,

Mr. Bheki Makhubu, Editor of *The Nation* Magazine,
Swaziland,

Mr. Dani Booysen, Secretary General to the Editor's Forum
of Namibia,

The Media Fraternity of Namibia

Esteemed Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning!

Allow me to begin by congratulating the government and people of Namibia for maintaining your number one ranking in Africa, when it comes to Press Freedom.

Your Excellency, your presence here today and decision to prioritise this occasion, is testament to the importance of a transparent and free media in Namibia. A media that reaches 96% of the population through radio and 66%¹ of the population through television.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I deliver a message on behalf of the UNESCO Director General, Ms. Irina Bokova, and we view the message from the UN Secretary General Mr. Antonio Guterres allow me to say a few words, about the day on behalf of the UN Country Team in Namibia.

This year's theme is entitled, **“Critical Minds for Critical Times: Media's role in advancing peaceful, just and inclusive societies”**

This theme, would have been, just as relevant in the early 90s, when critical minds came together (right here in Windhoek) in response

¹ Namibia National Census: 2012

to a critical challenge: press freedom as a tool for peace, justice and inclusion.

This concern, led to the landmark Windhoek Declaration on media pluralism and independence, and the proclamation by the UN General Assembly of World Press Freedom Day in 1993.

And every year since, the world has:

- celebrated the fundamental principles of press freedom;
- paused to remember media that is censored, harassed, and attacked;
- And payed tribute to journalists who have lost their lives for simply doing their jobs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today our common agenda in Namibia is informed by development strategies outlined in the SDGs, HPP, the NDP, and the Poverty Blue Print.

Heeding the call of H.E. The President, we are seized with how best we can 'harambee' to Wage War on Poverty. Wage War to liberate the 18 % of Namibians who survive on less than N\$520 per month².

² Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey (NHIES) 2015/2016. Preliminary figures.

And this important Agenda is not that of any one person, institution or organization; it is an agenda of partnership for all of us if it is to be realized.

For example:

- Governments and the international community need to create enabling environments in which we deliver services and operate.
- Academia and private sector need to ensure that the 66% of Namibians who are young, can solve development problems.
- And the reason we are gathered today; the media; need to raise awareness, generate balanced debate & create understanding, in order to hold us accountable to our aspirational goals: To end poverty, Save the planet and Ensure prosperity for all.

In Sum, we in the UN, your partner of choice, believe the media is a force for change:³ Change to ensure a peaceful and industrialized Namibia, driven by people who are educated, skilled, and healthy and where no one feels left out.

³ *"The power of media is that it forces necessary change"* Erik Qualman

Now I will deliver the Message from Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO:

Critical Minds for Critical Times -- this is the theme of the 2017 World Press Freedom Day.

"Only the independence, the character, the objectivity and the good judgment of the journalist and the media can overcome the terrible storms of the new world that threaten freedom of information everywhere."

Guillermo Cano Isaza, a Colombian journalist assassinated in 1986, wrote these words two years prior to his death and they continue to resonate today, 33 years later, as we celebrate World Press Freedom Day and the 20th anniversary of the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize.

Facing a crisis of audience identity, journalism stands before a horizon where old challenges are merging with new threats. The media business is being shaken to the core with the rise of digital networks and social media. Citizen journalists are redrawing the boundaries of journalism. Media accountability and credibility are falling under question. Online, the lines are blurring between advertising and editorial material, and we see private actors rising as key intermediaries, accompanied by new forms of 'private censorship.' These challenges merge with deeper transformations affecting societies. The Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year for 2016 is "post-truth." Combined with the concept of "fake news," questions are rising that go the heart of free, independent and professional journalism.

All this comes at a time when free, independent and pluralistic media has never been so important to empower individual women and men, strengthen good governance and the rule of law, and take forward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development -- specifically, Sustainable Development Goal 16, to build just, peaceful and inclusive societies. The media must not only be a source of reliable information -- it should provide a platform for a multitude of voices and mobilise new forces for tolerance and dialogue.

The stakes are clear. We need original, critical and well-researched journalism, guided by high professional, ethical standards and a quality media education -- combined with audiences that have the right media and information literacy skills.

UNESCO is leading this work across the world, starting by standing up for the safety of journalists. Far too often, murder remains the most tragic form of censorship -- 102 journalists paid the ultimate price in 2016. This is unacceptable and weakens societies as a whole. This is why UNESCO is spearheading the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity with partners around the globe.

Critical times call for critical minds. Today, I call on everyone to sharpen their minds to defend the freedoms that are essential for justice and peace -- this is UNESCO's message for the 2017 World Press Freedom Day.

In conclusion, as we celebrate this year's World Radio Day under the theme, "Radio is YOU" remember that having a radio means you are never alone – you always have a friend in radio.

I thank you!