

Freedom of Expression and Access to Information Post-2015: Measurable Targets for Goal 16

An international coalition of more than [200 organizations](#) welcomes the inclusion of targets for capable institutions, media freedom, and access to information by the United Nations member states now participating in the post-2015 development agenda dialogue.

The inclusion of targets on freedom of expression and access to information will help build stronger media and civil society institutions to closely and independently monitor all post-2015 development commitments.

The Open Working Group proposed on June 2, 2014, that the Sustainable Development Goal No. 16 to “achieve peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law, effective and capable institutions” include sub-goals to “improve public access to information and government data” and “promote freedom of media, association and speech.”

UNESCO and the Global Forum for Media Development convened representatives of this coalition to consider how to strengthen these welcome initiatives and submit for the consideration of member states proposed language and indicators for the text now being discussed by the Open Working Group.

Our proposal is consistent with the criteria that are guiding the efforts to reach consensus on the post-2015 global development agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals. We urge the continued inclusion of sub-goals 16.14 and 16.17, and we propose below several specific, measurable indicators to achieve these objectives by 2030.

UN Precedents:

- Even before the signing of the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring freedom of expression “a fundamental human right...and the touchstone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated.”
- In 1976, after a sufficient number of nations had ratified these instruments and associated covenants, these global commitments took on the force of international law, as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Measured and Measurable:

- UNESCO has been formally vested with the mandate for monitoring international commitments in this field. Many countries have adopted the UNESCO Media Development Indicators as a tool for measuring progress towards effective media systems at the country level.
- ITU provides data on Internet use and access.
- IPU tracks legislative and constitutional guarantees of public access to public information.
- UNHCHR reports on violations of media freedom.

The assembled coalition proposes that UNESCO, as the UN agency mandated to promote free, independent, and pluralistic media, take the lead role in monitoring progress toward the achievement of these goals. The UNESCO Institute of Statistics should play an advisory role in the collection of relevant data. A UN process should help build national capacities to gather data and promote dialogue on freedom of expression and public access to information.

Goal	Sub-goal/Target	Proposed revisions to sub-goal/targets	Illustrative Indicators	Existing data sources
OWG focus area 16: <i>Peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law and capable institutions</i>	Sub. 16.14 <i>by 2020 improve public access to information and government data, including on public finance management, public procurement and on the implementation of national development plans</i>	1. Implement effective regimes for public access to government information and data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal guarantees: access to information laws and/or constitutional guarantees Readily, freely available public access to public information, including online By 2030, ensure that all laws are publicized and accessible by all Improve public access to information and government data, including on public management, public procurement and on the implementation of national development plans, extractive industries 	UNESCO Media Development Indicators; Universal Periodic Review; UNHCHR reports on violations of media freedom; Journalist Safety Indicators (UNESCO), World Report on Freedom of Expression and Media Development; ITU data on Internet use and access; IPU data on access-to-information legislation and constitutional guarantees of access to information; [World Values Survey on trust of news media].
	Sub. 16.17 <i>promote freedom of media, association, and speech</i>	2. Promote freedom of expression, media, association and assembly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freedom of expression is guaranteed in law and respected in practice Legal and regulatory environment that ensures the rights of civil society to operate freely Universal access to ICTs People can use ICTs to communicate and associate freely People are not subject to threats, harassment, surveillance or physical attacks as a result of gathering or disseminating information Absence of criminal penalties for libel, defamation The strengthening of an enabling environment for independent and pluralistic media 	