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**International Day
to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists
(2 November 2014)
and
3rd UN Inter-Agency Meeting on the Safety of Journalists and
the Issue of Impunity
(4 November 2014)**

Concept Note

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OVERVIEW

The United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/68/163 at its 68th session in 2013 which proclaimed 2 November as the 'International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists'. The Resolution urged Member States to implement definite measures countering the present culture of impunity. The date was chosen in commemoration of the assassination of two French journalists in Mali on 2 November 2013.

This landmark resolution condemns all attacks and violence against journalists and media workers. It also urges Member States to do their utmost to prevent violence against journalists and media workers, to ensure accountability, bring to justice perpetrators of crimes against journalists and media workers, and ensure that victims have access to appropriate remedies. It further calls upon States to promote a safe and enabling environment for journalists to perform their work independently and without undue interference.

The background to this resolution and its focus on impunity is that over the past decade, more than 700 journalists have been killed for bringing news and information to the public. In 2012 alone, the UNESCO Director-General condemned the killing of 123 journalists, media workers, and social media producers of public interest journalism. In 2013, the figure decreased slightly to 91, but still represented the second deadliest year for journalists.

These figures do not include the many more journalists who on a daily basis suffer from non-fatal attacks, including torture, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, intimidation and harassment in both conflict and non-conflict situations. Furthermore, there are specific risks faced by women journalists including sexual attacks.

Worryingly, only one in ten cases committed against media workers over the past decade has led to a conviction. This impunity emboldens the perpetrators of the crimes and at the same time has a chilling effect on society including journalists themselves. Impunity breeds impunity and feeds into a vicious cycle.

According to the forthcoming UNESCO Director-General's Report on the Safety of Journalists and the Danger of Impunity, less than six percent of the 593 cases of killings of journalists from 2006-2013 have been resolved. A quarter of the cases are considered as "ongoing" as their investigations continue in various stages of the judicial system. In 60 percent of the cases, no information on judicial process has been made available to UNESCO notwithstanding the Director-General's requests for such.

When attacks on journalists remain unpunished, this sends a very negative message that reporting the "embarrassing truth" or "unwanted opinions" will get ordinary people in trouble. Furthermore, the population loses confidence in its own judiciary system that is meant to protect everyone from attacks on their rights. Perpetrators of crimes against journalists are thus emboldened when they realize that they can attack their targets without ever facing justice.

Society as a whole suffers from impunity. The kind of news that gets "silenced" is exactly the kind that the public needs to know. The public needs to be informed in order to make the best decisions in their lives, be it economic, social or political. This access to reliable and quality information is the very cornerstone of democracy, good governance, and effective institutions.

It is the recognition of such far-reaching consequences of impunity, especially of crimes against journalists, that the UN has declared 2 November as the International Day to End Impunity.

The day gives provides a strategic opportunity to all stakeholders to focus public attention on the importance of ending impunity for crimes against journalists. It also opens new possibilities to draw in constituencies whose primary interests may be other than the safety of journalists. For example, all those who work in the rule of law system, such as people involved in legal and judicial processes, can be reached out to, given the symbolic significance of journalists to the wider issue of impunity and justice. Others who are concerned with public participation and citizen's rights to speak out on various issues such as corruption or domestic violence, will also share an interest in the resolution on combating impunity of attacks on journalists who by definition are actors in the public eye, and whose situation sends a signal to society at large.

Significantly, the Paris Declaration of the 2014 World Press Freedom Day conference held at UNESCO Headquarters states: "the continuing high level of killings of journalists calls for intensified action by international organizations, governments, media and other actors to give heightened attention to strengthening the safety of journalists and to bringing their killers to justice." In particular, it called on journalists, professional and support associations, media outlets, internet intermediaries and social media practitioners to "support the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity with complementary or joint actions, and to enhance cooperation with each other." A major opportunity for this is the new International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists.

As the first time that the UN officially marks this new day on the international calendar, it is important that the International Day becomes widely known and is positioned for ever-expanding impact in coming years. The date in 2014 is thus of great significance to UN bodies, governments, the media, and to civil society, as well as to potential new stakeholders where hitherto there have not been occasions to connect issues in mutual synergy. The Day is therefore a very promising platform that can make a valuable contribution to the safety of journalists in the interests of societal development as a whole.

For its part, UNESCO will work with its field offices around the world, and with partners across the spectrum to ensure a success of this special opportunity to make a difference.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA COMBAT IMPUNITY

In 2014, the global community will rally behind the 2 November date as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists as proclaimed by the UNGA Resolution on Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

Organizations within international civil society have long been active in the fight against impunity for many years. For example, the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX), a global network of free expression organizations, had previously operated a three week long campaign each year, ending on 23 November 2011, to raise awareness and fight the culture of impunity. Over the course of the month, this campaign encourages individuals to take action while different local organizations host different events around the world. The culminating date of the 23rd is the anniversary of the Maguindanao massacre which happened on 23 November 2009 in the Philippines, when a convoy of over 50 people were killed, 32 of which were journalists and media workers.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) also runs a global campaign against impunity. The "Speak Justice: Voices against Impunity" is a digital campaign that raises awareness of the

issues and driving the global call for justice. Their dedicated website, www.speakjusticenow.org features interactive tools showing that journalists murdered around the world were reporting primarily on politics, corruption, conflict, crime and human rights. CPJ also produces the Impunity Index which calculates the number of unsolved journalist murders as a percentage of each country's population.

The International Federation of Journalists' (IFJ), the umbrella group for over 600,000 journalists worldwide conduct campaigns that urges authorities of the countries with the highest death tolls of journalists to investigate these killings and bring their perpetrators to justice. The campaign page features profiles of journalists who have been victims of violence in these countries and also resources allowing readers to take actions such as writing petition letters, visits to embassies, protests and social media campaigning.

Reporters without Borders (RSF), the Paris-based organization, runs targeted campaigns in countries where impunity is a major issue for freedom of the press. The Inter American Press Association (IAPA) targets their impunity campaigns in the Latin America region, through their Impunity Project and has partnered organizations such as the Knight Foundation and International Association of Broadcasting (IAB) in their campaigns.

Other international NGOs such as Article 19, Freedom House, Press Emblem Campaign (PEC), International Press Institute (IPI), World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), and PEN International also work on combating impunity with special reports and publicly calling on governments to investigate each of the cases of killings of journalists.

The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), representing more than 18,000 publications, 15,000 online sites and over 3,000 companies, produces free multimedia resources to help the public understand the reasons behind killing of journalists through infographic and video materials.

Broadcast organizations such as BBC, Al Jazeera, France Media Monde, Radio Netherlands Worldwide and others are interested in the occasion, and discussions are taking place with them about coverage. It is possible that Internet companies such as Twitter and Google can also be brought into the picture.

It is expected that all these groups combined can result in energies and actions into the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists and the surrounding period.

3RD UN INTER-AGENCY MEETING ON THE SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS AND THE ISSUE OF IMPUNITY

UNESCO has been tasked by the UN General Assembly through Resolution A/RES/68/163 to be the overall coordinator of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity as well as to facilitate the implementation of the International Day to End Impunity in collaboration with governments and relevant stakeholders.

As part of that responsibility, UNESCO is convening the 3rd UN Inter-Agency Meeting on the Safety of Journalists and The Issue of Impunity on 4 November 2014 in Strasbourg, France in conjunction with the inaugural observation of the Day. This multi-stakeholder meeting is co-hosted by Council of Europe and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

(OHCHR), and is part of the series of regular meeting led by UNESCO on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity.

The [first UN Inter-Agency Meeting](#) on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity took place at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on 13-14 September 2011. Representatives of United Nations agencies, programmes and funds met at UNESCO to draft an Action Plan to improve the safety of journalists and combat impunity. The meeting was also attended by a wide range of international and regional institutions, professional organizations, NGOs and Member States that provided recommendations to the UN family on the draft UN Plan of Action. The finalized [UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity](#) was subsequently endorsed by the [UN Chief Executives Board on 12 April 2012](#). It was also welcomed in the UN General Assembly resolution that established the IDEI.

The [2nd UN Inter-Agency Meeting](#) was held in Vienna, Austria, from 22 to 23 November 2012. The aim of the second meeting was to formulate a concrete [UN Implementation Strategy on The Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity](#). The Strategy help guides the implementation the UN Plan of Action on The Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. The second meeting was co-hosted by UNESCO, OHCHR, UNDP, and UNODC. Fifteen UN Agencies and more than 40 non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations, independent experts, media groups and professional associations who participated in the meeting reached a global commitment to ensure that all the issues of journalists safety and combating impunity will be tackled and through a multi-stakeholder approach.

The current 3rd UN Inter-Agency Meeting is taking place at the premise of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France on 4 November 2014.

In addition to the co-hosts, the meeting is expected to be participated in by relevant UN agencies including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI), the United Nations Information Centers (UNIC), United Nations Women (UNWOMEN), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), United Nations Communication Group (UNCG), UN Department for Peace Keeping Operations (UNDPKO), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), and other UN bodies.

As in previous years, the event will continue the collaboration with the Special Procedures mandate holders of the UN and regional intergovernmental bodies, who have given significant attention to the issues of safety of journalists. These include the UN's Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the UN's Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, the UN's Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, and the UN's Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. Invitations have been extended to the relevant Special Rapporteurs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization of American States (OAS), and the African Union.

Member States, specifically countries where the UN Plan of Action is being implemented in its various stages including the four countries selected for the first phase of the implementation, namely Nepal, Pakistan, South Sudan and Iraq as well as others where elements of the UN Plan of Action is being implemented, have been invited. They are asked to share with the various stakeholders the key achievements, lessons learnt, and help shape recommendations to move forward.

From the civil society, there will be participation from NGOs working in the field of press freedom and freedom of expression including but not limited to Article 19, Centre for Media Freedom, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Doha Centre for Media Freedom, Freedom House, Free Press Unlimited, Inter American Press Association (IAPA), IFEX, IREX (and IREX Europe), International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), International Media Support (IMS), International News Safety Institute (INSI), International Press Institute (IPI), International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF), Open Society Foundation, Press Emblem Campaign (PEC), Reporters without Borders, WAN-IFRA, World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), etc.

UNESCO is also working with intergovernmental organizations including the Council of Europe which is one of the co-hosts, and the European Courts of Human Rights.

Furthermore, as part of the wider engagement with the public, UNESCO is working together with major media organizations to raise awareness of these issues including the BBC, Al Jazeera Media Network, Radio Netherlands Worldwide, Swedish Radio, and France Media Monde. The two journalists, Ghislain Dupont and Claude Vernon who were killed in Mali on 2 November 2013, were reporters of Radio France International (RFI) which is now part of the France Medias Monde.

Additionally, a Seminar and Inter-regional Dialogue on the Protection of Journalists is being co-organized by UNESCO, Council of Europe, Centre for Freedom of the Media, and European Lawyers' Union on 3 November at the European Courts of Human Rights (<http://www.inter-justice.org/>). The Seminar will provide a forum for an intensified inter-regional dialogue among representatives of regional human rights courts and inter-governmental organizations in Europe, the Americas and Africa, together with other experts and concerned parties, to examine the progress of each of the multilateral systems as well as significant gaps in protection. It will also explore ways of advancing the adoption of best practices in regional and national jurisdictions, with the goal of developing a consistent framework of protection globally. This event is by invitation only.

OBJECTIVES OF THE 3RD UN INTER AGENCY MEETING

This meeting reviews the first two years of implementation of the UN Plan of Action from 2013-2014, including the key achievements, challenges, lessons learnt as well as to discuss steps for the future implementation of the UN Plan of Action.

The meeting will take account of experiences to date, at the global level and in-country. It will consider the normative achievements regarding the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity. Among these is the 2013 UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/68/163 which condemned the killings of journalists and declared 2 November as an International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists. The Resolution also requested the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its 69th session on the implementation of the resolution, thereby setting in place a monitoring and accountability mechanism within the UN system.

Also amongst normative developments to be discussed, in September 2013, the Human Rights Council adopted Resolution A/HRC/21/12 which condemned in the strongest terms all attacks and violence against journalists, and stressed the need to ensure greater protection for all media professionals and journalistic sources.

Elsewhere, the Council of the European Union adopted the [EU Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline](#) on 12 May 2014 and the Committee of Ministers adopted the [Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the Protection of Journalism and the Safety of Journalists and Other Media Actors](#) on 30 April 2014. Both documents call on the States to implement the UN Plan of Action as they recognized as important tools to promote safety of journalists.

The 3rd Inter-Agency meeting will also discuss general awareness of the issues and of the UN Plan of Action itself. Among these is the extent to which international NGOs have acted on the potential role of the UN Plan of Action as a mechanism that could improve the safety of journalists and increased resource mobilisation. Discussion will also cover the response of news organizations and media houses, for example Al Jazeera Media Network has included principles of the UN Plan of Action as part of their regular safety training for their journalists.

Further on the agenda is assessment of developments in the selected countries where the first phase of the UN Plan of Action is being implemented. In Pakistan, Nepal and South Sudan, the UN Plan of Action has had the effect of a focal point which brought together the various stakeholders as envisioned by the plan to the same table, and mobilising resources for activities. These initiatives have included the local authorities, UN agencies, international and local NGOs, academia and media practitioners themselves to devise national strategies to address the local needs and challenges. However, several attempts in Iraq to kick start a national discussion on safety of journalists and to develop a national strategy had not been brought to fruition due to complexities in that country. Developments in other countries will be discussed, such as the training of security forces on the safety of journalists in Tunisia and the work with judiciary system in Latin America.

As regard to monitoring and sharing of information, the meeting will also analyse UNESCO Journalists' Safety Indicators (JSIs). This mechanism, being piloted in three countries, is a set of systematic and comprehensive survey to provide a baseline for information about the safety of journalists in a particular country. Over time, this baseline helps to highlight areas for action, and serves as a yardstick against which progress (or regress) can be measured. Also for discussion will be UNESCO's bi-monthly newsletter, one of the tools to share information on the latest development on the safety of journalists as related to the UN Plan of Action and which is sent to various stakeholders and further distributed through the 63 UN Information Centers around the world.

OUTCOMES AND STRUCTURE OF THE 3RD UN INTER AGENCY MEETING

The following are the expected outcomes of the meeting:

- Maintain the momentum of the UN Plan of Action, and the timing of the meeting will draw attention to the International Day to End Impunity.
- Receive and evaluate a draft assessment of the UN Plan of Action compiled by UNESCO.
- Produce a set of recommendations for the UN Plan of Action going forward in the 2015-2019 period.

Structure of the Meeting:

The meeting is designed to accommodate the viewpoints of each stakeholder group. There will be three specific sessions: the session on UN Agencies; the session on inter-governmental organizations and Member States; and the session on the civil society. The focus of the discussions will be on the key achievements, the challenges and the lessons learnt and the recommendations to move forward with the UN Plan of Action.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION:

The meeting is open to all stakeholders, but registration is required due to space limitation. Please send your request to Mr Ming-Kuok LIM at mk.lim@unesco.org (with copy to Mr Gerwin DE ROY at g.de-roy@unesco.org) **before 15 September 2014.**

Comments on the objectives, outcomes and structure are welcome, and should be sent to Mr Ming-Kuok LIM at mk.lim@unesco.org **before 15 September 2014.**

As several other events are taking in Strasbourg, France between 3 and 5 November 2014, participants are encouraged to book accommodation early.

Other information could be accessed here: www.unesco.org/new/3rdInterAgencyMeeting

RELATED LINKS AND BACKGROUND MATERIALS:

Related Links:

[UNESCO Safety of Journalists Website](#)

[CPJ Impunity Index of 2014](#)

[Doha Centre for Media Freedom](#)

[Freedom House](#)

[IAPA's Impunity Project](#)

[IFEX's Campaign](#)

[IPI's Special Report on Impunity](#)

[International Media Support \(IMS\)](#)

[International News Safety Institute \(INSI\)](#)

[International Women's Media Foundation \(IWMF\)](#)

[PEN International's Write Against Impunity Campaign](#)

[Press Emblem Campaign \(PEC\)](#)

[Reporters without Borders \(RSF\)](#)

[WAN-IFRA's Multimedia resources](#)

Background Materials:

[UNGA Resolution A/RES/68/163](#)

[UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity](#)

[The Implementation Strategy of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity 2013-2014](#)

UNESCO Director-General's Report on the Safety of Journalists and the Danger of Impunity to the IPDC Council (available soon)