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Four-Phase Plan Of Action For Introducing Community Radio In Nigeria Initiated

A four-phase plan of action which will lead to the emergence and development of community radio in Nigeria was initiated in Lagos last month.

The plan was drawn by members of the Steering Committee on the initiative for Community Radio in Nigeria, which held its inaugural meeting at the Lagos Airport Hotel, Ikeja, on November 10 and 11.

The Steering Committee was constituted by two international non-governmental organisations, Panos Institute West Africa (PIWA), and the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) in conjunction with a Nigeria media NGO, the Institute for Media and Society (IMS).

Members of the Steering Committee are Dr. Umaru Pate, a lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Maiduguri; Mrs. Miriam Menkiti, Executive Director, Women Information Network (WINET) at the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) in Enugu; Mr. Ishaq Modibbo Kawu, of the Daily Trust Newspapers; Mr. Edetaen Ojo, Executive Director of Media Rights Agenda (MRA); and Mr. Jiti Ogunye, the Executive Director of the Lawyers League for Human Rights (LLHR).

Other members are Mr. Dapo Olorunyomi, a media consultant; Mr. Alymana Bathily, a consultant with the PIWA; Mr. George Christensen, a board member of AMARC; Mr. Johan Deflander of PIWA; and Mr. Akin Akingbulu, the Executive Director of IMS.

The Plan of Action has the following components:

Phase One: the inauguration of the Steering Committee, which will draft a Statement on Community Radio and develop a concept paper on community radio, under which it will propose a review of existing policy as well as the reform of existing legislation and regulations.
on broadcasting to recognise community radios in Nigeria. The Committee will also explore the feasibility of establishing pilot community radios in the six geo-political zones of the country, as advocacy tools.

Phase Two: the holding of four regional awareness seminars in different parts of the country, to be attended by representatives of civil society organisations, community based organisations, grassroots organisations, media-related and media organisations, officials of the National Broadcasting Commission, policy-makers, including some state commissioners for information and the chairpersons of the committees on information in some state Houses of Assembly.

The outcome of the regional seminars, which will include a final community radio concept paper as well as guidelines for the reform of policy, legislation and regulation, will be validated at a National Validation Seminar which will take place next year.

Phase Three: This will involve three levels of advocacy work – international, national and local. At the international level, the international partners in the project, PIWA and AMARC, will mobilise support for the case of community radio in Nigeria. At the national level, the Nigerian partner, the IMS, working with members of the Steering Committee, will undertake a series of advocacy activities, including personal contacts with key advocacy targets, dissemination of advocacy materials, initiating academic research projects to support advocacy work, and organising public awareness campaigns. At the local level, the partners, working with members of the Steering Committee, will organise training workshops to develop the capacity of local organisations to undertake advocacy in favour of community radio.

Phase Four: If the idea of establishing pilot community radio projects is found to be feasible, the partners, working with members of the Steering Committee, will embark on the establishment of pilot community radio stations in the six geo-political zones of the country. This will involve the identification of locations for the pilot stations, training and technical support to the management and personnel of the community radios and the operation of the stations for an initial period of about 12 months, during which they will be monitored before a subsequent evaluation.

In a “Statement on Community Radio Broadcasting in Nigeria” drawn up at the inaugural meeting, members of the Steering Committee said they recognised the desirability of pluralistic sources of information, especially at community levels, and committed themselves to a process of bringing about the emergence and development of community radio in Nigeria.

They called on the Nigerian authorities to endorse and adopt the African Charter on Broadcasting, a document agreed to by stakeholders at the 10th Anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration on Freedom of the Press held in Windhoek, Namibia in May 2001 and later endorsed by the African Union (AU) at its summit in Maputo, Mozambique, in July 2003.

The Committee members urged the Nigerian authorities to undertake a comprehensive review of the National Mass Communication Policy, which will lead to the emergence of a new Policy that recognises a pluralist radio sector, including the public, private commercial and community radio sectors, each with a mandate to respond to the specific needs of the people it serves.

They recommended that within the framework of the definition of “community broadcasting”, as contained in the African Charter on Broadcasting, the Nigerian authorities should draw up a frequency allocation plan that ensures equitable access for all tiers of broadcasters to frequencies in urban and in rural areas and that the principles and procedures for frequency allocation to community radio should be publicly stated, and implemented in an open and transparent manner.

The Committee members also suggested that in accordance with the principles enunciated in the UNESCO Florence Treaty, Nigerian authorities should introduce and implement a waiver of tariffs and duties on equipment and consumables for community radios, since they are non-profit ventures. They also proposed that because of its public service mission
and its not-for-profit status, community radio should be exempted from the payment of licensing fees by the NBC.

In order to ensure the financial viability and sustainability of community radio, they recommended that the Nigerian government should contribute substantially to an independent community radio Fund.

They advocated that the National Mass Media Policy should recognise and support the specific training needs of community radios, especially as regards management, programming and maintenance.

Members of the Steering Committee also recommended that a review of the existing legal framework for broadcasting in Nigeria be undertaken with a view to recognising and providing for the licensing and establishment of community radios. In particular, they urged, the National Broadcasting Commission Act No. 38 of 1992 and its amendment, Act No. 55 of 1999, should be further amended to reflect these changes.

They called on the National Assembly to speedily pass into Law the Freedom of Information Bill which has been pending since 1999, saying this would be in line with the spirit of Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Joint Committee of House of Representatives Submits Report on Freedom of Information Bill

The three committees of the House of Representatives charged with reviewing the Freedom of Information Bill formally submitted their report to the entire House last month with a recommendation that the Bill should be passed into Law.

In a joint report signed by Honourable Alaba Lad-Ojomo, Chairman of the House Committee on Information; Honourable Alex Nwofe, Chairman of the House Committee on Justice; and Honourable Obeten O. Obeten, Chairman of the House Committee on Human Rights, they said: “Since this Bill is one of those measures being put in place to check the spate of corruption in the system, giving this Bill positive hearing will no doubt add to the long list of successes recorded by this Honourable House.”

Honourable Lad-Ojomo moved the motion on the floor of the House for the House to receive the report, while Honourable Abdul Oroh, Deputy Chairman of the House Committee on Human Rights, seconded the motion upon which it was accepted by the House. The Bill is now awaiting scheduling for the third and final reading in the House, during which it may be passed.

In their report, the joint committees noted that following the resolution of the House on July, 29, after a debate on the General Principles of the Bill, it was referred jointly to three Committees, although the Information Committee was given primary responsibility of directing the work of reviewing the Bill in its entirety.

The report said the “Notice of the Referral of the Bill” was served on the three Committees on August 12, and that by the notice, the Committees were to submit their report on the Bill to the Committee of the Whole House, within a reasonable time frame.

According to the report, “Against this background and having regard to the fact that the Information Committee had the primary responsibility of preparing the report on the Bill, it was first considered at the level of the Information Committee. Thereafter a nine member joint committee, made up of three representatives each, drawn from the Committees on Information, Justice and Human Rights, was set up to further review the Bill.”

It said the Joint Committee, which met several times in the course of its deliberation on the Bill, prepared its report, which was further subjected to additional extensive consideration at the joint meeting of the Chairmen of the three Committees in question and that the outcome of
these long process and procedures to which the Bill was subjected while it was being considered at the committee stage, formed the basis of the report.

The Joint Committee said: “Given the importance of ensuring that the enactment of this Legislation is enriched by widespread consultation and input by stakeholders, the Joint Committee relied adequately on inputs and views shared by opinion moulders and major stakeholders through their submissions in a Public Hearing conducted on the Bill by the last Assembly. By extension, the Joint Committee in its deliberation on the Bill was very conscious of the public interest generated by the Bill and of the need to be thorough and avoid ambiguities in the final draft of the Bill that is now being presented to the Committee of the whole House, for their consideration.”

The Joint Committee said it was guided by the following documents in its deliberations: the Approved Rules of the House 2002; the 1999 Constitution; the report of the Public Hearing conducted on the Bill; and the memoranda submitted by major stakeholders.

It noted that the objective of the Bill is “to make public records and information more freely available, provide for public access to public records and information and protect public records and information to the extent consistent with the public interest and the protection of personal privacy. It also intends to protect serving public officers from adverse consequences for disclosing certain kinds of official information without authorization in addition to establishing procedures for the achievement of these purposes.”

The Joint Committee reminded members of the House of Representatives that one of the cardinal points upon which this Bill is founded is the promotion of an enabling environment for unfettered access to information as it concerns the conduct of public affairs, records and documents, considering that one of the major set backs to the growth of Nigeria’s fledgling democracy is the fact that most official transactions, both in the public and private sectors, are shrouded in secrecy.

Observing that “this situation, to say the least, has negative implication in the country’s quest for transparency and openness in the conduct of public affairs,” it stressed that since the Bill is one of those measures being put in place to check the spate of corruption in the system, giving the Bill positive hearing would add to the long list of successes recorded by the House of Representatives.

The Joint Committee, however, recommended that the title of the proposed law be changed from the Freedom of Information Bill to “Freedom Of Access To Information Act 2003”.

The recommendation was among other minor amendments proposed to the Bill as contained in their report to the House.

The report said after consideration of the “Short Title of the Bill” with particular reference to the purpose of the Bill, the Joint Committee decided that the Short Title should be made more embracing and reflective of the purpose of the Bill.

The Committee also proposed an amendment to Section 2 of the Bill by substituting “public fund” for “tax revenue” under “Public/Government Institution” because of their view that the retention of “tax revenue” would tend to reduce sources of government revenue to only tax revenue.

It also recommended that the provision of Section 14(2) of the Bill be amended to prevent possible abuse by public officers. It therefore suggested the inclusion of the phrase “provided that such public overriding interest is to be determined by a court of law”.

The Committee also recommended that Section 17(1)(iv) of the Bill, which provides that “Subject to subsection (2), the head of a government and or public institution shall refuse to disclose any record requested under this Act that contains personal information. Information exempted under this subsection shall include: information required of any tax payer in connection with the assessment or collection of any tax unless disclosure is otherwise requested by state statute,” be expunged. The Committee said the section was expunged as it gives room
for manipulation of tax policies by government officers and individual taxpayers thereby encouraging corruption, which the Bill intends to fight.

**European Countries Rank High In Media Honesty List**

A survey by the Institute for Public Relations in the United States has shown that bribing journalists will have the least success in Northern Europe.

Finland tops the list of countries where it is difficult to bribe journalists, which ranks countries in various categories such as the freedom of the press and ethical codes for journalists. Denmark, Austria, Germany and the UK also feature in top most media.

Surprisingly, the survey demonstrates that the French media is the second most easily corruptible in the EU.

According to the report the most dishonest journalists come from Greece. Of the future EU states, Estonia’s media is ranked as the least likely to be corrupt. Poland is the worst accession country for bribery in the media, featuring in 41st place.

The worst country in the world for media corruption, according to the survey, is China, followed by Saudi Arabia and Vietnam.

**WPFC Names Broadcaster, Mark Bench, New Executive Director**

The World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC) has named Mr. Mark Bench as its new executive director. He succeeds Marilyn Greene, who has left to do independent media consulting. She had been executive director since 1996.

Mr. Bench was for 20 years a vice-president and general manager of award-winning New York FM radio station WRFM. He was also a board member and vice-president of the International Association of Broadcasters (IAB), and led media training activities in Central and Eastern Europe for the International Media Fund.

**Media Rights Monitor** is published monthly by the Media Rights Agenda (MRA), an independent, non governmental organisation established for the purpose of promoting and protecting media freedom and freedom of expression in Nigeria. MRA is registered under Nigerian law and has Observer Status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights.

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2004 Newspaper Congress And Editors Forum Holds In Turkey

The 2004 World Newspaper Congress and World Editors Forum of the World Association of Newspapers (WAN) will take place in Istanbul, Turkey, between May and June next year. The two events, scheduled to hold simultaneously from May 30 to June 2, 2004, will bring together publishers, chief executives, managing directors, and editors from around the world to discuss the latest developments in print media.

The 57th World Newspaper Congress will draw on the findings of this year’s congress in Dublin and examine ways newspapers can survive economically while advertising and circulation figures continue to drop. The conference will examine how successful newspapers advertise effectively, and ways to reverse declines in readership.

Entitled “Winning Strategies for the New Business Environment,” the congress will include five sessions moderated by leading figures in the newspaper industry, including Brendan Hopkins, CEO of APN News and Media in Australia and New Zealand; Fred Arp, director of Telegraaf Holding in the Netherlands; and Pradeep Guha, president of the group that publishes the Times of India.

Istanbul 2004 will take over where Dublin 2003 left off, with an outstanding line up of leading CEOs presenting the successful strategies they are employing to win and prosper in the new environment.

Special attention will be given to the new advertising concepts that newspapers need to embrace to win the maximum amount of business and to ‘best practice’ employed at the most efficient, effective, economic and enterprising newspapers companies. Circulation issues will again be in sharp focus, with a special session examining newspapers that are reversing the general trend towards readership decline.

The World Editors Forum is specifically geared towards chief and deputy editors, and other senior news executives around the world. This year’s forum will focus on how the “digital
revolution” has changed the way newspapers collect, produce, and disseminate information. Sessions will look at press credibility in the information age, the growth of tabloids, changes in front page design, and photojournalism etc.

A fifth session will examine the influence of the Arab media, particularly Arab newspapers, in the wake of the war in Iraq. The forum will also include a special social event for the editors to meet and talk with their colleagues from the Islamist press in Turkey.

More information on the conference may be obtained from WAN at 25 rue d’Astorg, 75008 Paris, France. Telephone (33-1) 47 42 85 00, fax (33-1) 47 4249 48, e-mail contact_us@wan.asso.fr or by visiting http://www.wan-press.org/article2701.html

ARTICLE 19 Seeks Reform Of ADB’s Policy On Information Disclosure

ARTICLE 19, the Global Campaign for Free Expression, and NGO based in London has asked the African Development Bank (ADB) to introduce far-reaching reforms of its Policy on Disclosure of Information to ensure “the public’s right to know” in line with international standards on freedom of information.

In a letter to the Bank’s President, Mr. Omar Kabbaj, ARTICLE 19 said although it welcomed the Bank’s decision to review its Policy on Disclosure of Information and its commitment to encouraging public debate through improved transparency, it was concerned that the proposed amendments fail to put in place a progressive access to information regime necessary to ensure the full exercise of the public’s right to know in accordance with international standards.

The letter, signed by ARTICLE 19’s Law Programme Director, Mr. Toby Mendel, has been endorsed by 10 civil society organisations in Nigeria and other parts of the world. Those who endorsed the letter include Jennifer Kalafut of the Bank Information Center, a non-governmental organisation based in Washington D.C.; Mr. Osaro Odemwingie, Coordinator of the Freedom of Information Coalition in Lagos; Mr. Celestin Nsabiye of Global Village in Burundi; and Mr. Edetaen Ojo, Executive Director of Media Rights Agenda (MRA) in Lagos.

Others are Miss Lynne Muthoni Wanyeki, the Executive Director of African Women’s Development and Communications Network (FEMNET) in Nairobi, Kenya; Mr. Akong Charles Ndika of Global Village in Cameroon; Mallam Yunusa Ya’u of the Centre for Information Technology and Development in Kano; Tracy Naughton, a Communication and Development Specialist in South Africa; Mr. Lawrence Umoette Head of the Abuja Bureau of Galaxy Television; and Mr. Tunde Oladunjoye, the Executive Director of the Centre for Media Education and Networking in Lagos.

ARTICLE 19 said: “In this letter, we address a number of specific concerns with the proposed Disclosure Policy that we believe should be addressed. In our view, significant changes should be incorporated which transform the system from an essentially internal, discretionary regime to one that provides for clear tests for disclosure along with the right to appeal any refusal to disclose to an independent appeals body. To do this, amendments need to be made to the system of exceptions, and explicit process guarantees and provision for an independent review mechanism need to be added to the Policy. The Disclosure Policy also contains what appear to be substantial internal contradictions regarding what information is actually subject to disclosure.”

ARTICLE 19 argued that under international law, everyone has the right freedom of expression and information, including the right to access information held by public authorities.

It noted that in his 1998 Annual Report, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression declared that freedom of information includes the right to access information held by public bodies thus: “the right to seek, receive and impart information imposes a positive obligation on States to ensure access to information, particularly with regard
to information held by Government in all types of storage and retrieval systems….” It added that the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression for the Organisation of American States (OAS) has also affirmed the fundamental nature of access to information held by public bodies.

ARTICLE 19 said although these statements by the Special Rapporteurs, as well as many other authoritative statements on the right to information, are directed to States, it was of the view that these international human rights obligations are also binding on inter-governmental bodies such as the ADB.

It said: “In our view, States’ universal legal obligations apply to bodies they create collectively, just as they apply to bodies they create on their own, such as national public bodies. Furthermore, if this were not the case, States could effectively avoid their obligations by creating inter-governmental bodies and allocating responsibilities to them, a situation which is clearly untenable. It cannot be the case that inter-governmental bodies are allowed to breach human rights rules of universal application. Regardless of the formal legal position, the overwhelming rationale for access to information held by national public bodies applies equally to intergovernmental organisations, including international financial institutions.”

ARTICLE 19 noted that the World Bank has recognised in relation to its activities that “transparency and accountability are crucial for promoting good governance and are essential for drawing more stakeholders and supporters in the development process.”

Observing that the ADB’s Disclosure Policy declares that its objective is to “disclose all information on its operations and its activities unless there are compelling reasons not to do so,” ARTICLE 19 said as a statement of principle, this was a positive starting point for the Policy, but noted that the Policy immediately precludes from disclosure any information in the Bank’s possession that cannot be characterized as relating to operations or activities.

It contended that overall, the system of exceptions provided for in the Disclosure Policy failed to conform to the standards established under international law, whereby a refusal to disclose information is legitimate only where the refusing body can show that the following conditions are met, namely that the information relates to a legitimate aim listed in the law or policy; that the disclosure threatens harm to that aim; and that the harm to the aim is greater than the public interest in having the information disclosed.

ARTICLE 19 noted that the opening statement of principle in the ADB’s Disclosure Policy appeared limited by two statements that follow, the first of which reads: “Furthermore, the information generated, drafted, prepared or obtained in the course of Bank Group activities is considered part of its archives, and may be released only in accordance with established policies authorized by duly constituted Bank Group authorities.”

It said the second statement, found within the principles upon which the Disclosure Policy is “premised and anchored”, declares that the availability of information pursuant to the Policy “shall not be construed as an expressed or implied waiver of the privileges and immunities afforded to the Bank Group pursuant to the provisions of the Agreement Establishing the African Development Bank, including those regarding the inviolability of the Bank’s archives…….”

ARTICLE 19 argued that the combined meaning of these statements is not clear as it is not evident whether the policies referred to in the first statement includes the Disclosure Policy. In any event, it said, the Agreement Establishing the ADB effectively trumps the Disclosure Policy in case of conflict.

The organisation said while this may to some extent be unavoidable, its Principles on Freedom of Information Legislation, which reflect international best practice in this area, provide that laws – or in this case, policies – implementing the public’s right to know should require that other legislation – or agreements – be interpreted, as far as possible, in a manner consistent with its provisions. It therefore recommended that a commitment be made to interpret the Agreement in light of the principles of information disclosure.
ARTICLE 19 also criticised the Disclosure Policy on that ground that instead of providing that all information will be subject to disclosure, subject only to a limited regime of exceptions where all legitimate grounds for refusing access are listed, the Policy takes the opposite approach, providing access only to a list of 30 categories of information with the result that documents that do not fall within one of the identified categories will not be disclosed.

For instance, the Policy states in Paragraph 3.33 that major contract award decisions over 50,000 UA will be published, but not those for smaller amounts. ARTICLE 19 argued that this makes little sense, serves no legitimate purpose and is contrary to the internationally accepted standards.

It also noted that within the categories of information that are identified as accessible to the public, in many circumstances the final decision for release depends on permission from the Board of Directors and/or the country concerned, adding that this is true, for example, of Paragraph 3.23 relating to “reports prepared by the Bank Group and presented at consultative group meetings” as well as Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative-related documents.

But it observed that there is no indication provided as to when the Board or the country concerned may legitimately withhold permission to disclose information from these categories, beyond the general requirement stated in the Policy that reasons for withholding information must be “compelling.”

ARTICLE 19 said: “While we recognise the need for the Bank to have clear and acceptable arrangements with member countries and others regarding the disclosure of information they provide, we are of the view that it is not enough simply to allow the provider to classify information. Instead, the ADB should use its influence to negotiate clear and open criteria for labelling information as confidential, and should then apply these criteria when deciding whether or not to disclose documents. These criteria should address legitimate aims and their application should be subject to both the harm and public interest tests.”

The Disclosure Policy identifies eight classes of information the disclosure of which may be explicitly restricted.

But ARTICLE 19 argued that some of the exceptions do serve legitimate aims, while others do not. For example, it observed, one exception in Paragraph 4.9 states: “public availability of some information may be precluded on an ad hoc basis when, because of its content, wording, or timing, disclosure would be detrimental to the interests of the Bank Group, its partners, a member country, or Bank staff.”

In its view, this grants almost unfettered discretion to the Bank to refuse access to information and seriously undermines the entire Disclosure Policy.

Besides, ARTICLE 19 said, none of the eight classes of information access to which may be restricted are subject to a harm test or even to the Policy’s own requirement that the reason to refuse disclosure be “compelling” as some of the exceptions apply to entire classes of information, rather than to documents the disclosure of which might case harm.

It insisted that exceptions should only be applied on a case-by-case basis so as not to unnecessarily frustrate the goals of the Disclosure Policy, especially as there is no public interest override in the current Policy.

It observed that in practice, implementation of the right to know requires clear process guarantees, including requirements of timely decision-making to prevent undue delay in the provision or refusal of information and that refusals be accompanied by substantive written reasons, which are necessary not only for any appeal, but also because requesters have a right to know why their requests have been refused.

In particular, it noted, if information is withheld, either in whole or in part, it should be clear to external stakeholders exactly what is not being disclosed and why.

ARTICLE 19 urged the Bank to also consider a requirement that the public be informed of the existence of a document requested, even if its disclosure is prohibited by the specified
confidentiality requirements, outside of those rare cases where even acknowledgement of the existence of the document may cause harm to a legitimate secrecy interest.

It observed that these process guarantees are provided for in almost all national access to information laws, as well as some policies adopted by inter-governmental organisations, such as the UNDP’s Public Information Disclosure Policy which requires requests to be responded to within 30 business days and denials to be accompanied by written reasons.

ARTICLE 19 noted that although the guiding principles of the ADB Disclosure Policy provide some indication of how the regime will be implemented, they fall short of international best practice in this area.

For instance, it said, the principles provide: “Information provided to the public shall be made available in a form and at a time that enhances the quality of Bank activities,” which places Bank interests above the idea that disclosure is a right that should be respected in accordance with clear principles set out in advance, in addition to the fact that there is no requirement that refusals be accompanied by written reasons.

ARTICLE 19 argued that any disclosure system is ultimately discretionary unless requesters have a right to appeal any refusal to disclose information to an independent body as such a right of appeal is crucial to the success and credibility of a disclosure system because, in the absence of a review body, there is no independent check on whether a refusal to disclose information is in accordance with the applicable law or policy.

This, it said, is recognised in practically all national laws on access to information, which often provide for an appeal to an independent administrative tribunal or ombudsman, and then to the courts. It added that this principle has also been accepted by UNDP in its Disclosure Policy, which provides for the establishment of an Oversight Panel for appeals, consisting of three UNDP professional staff members and two members from the non-profit sector.

But it observed that the ADB Disclosure Policy, by contrast, does not provide for any independent review and, instead states: “The final determination as to what information may be released to the public will rest with the Bank Group.”

ARTICLE 19 noted that the staff of international institutions, private sector organizations and government civil servants sometimes have access to information which may expose official wrongdoing, potentially of a very serious nature, but they are afraid to release it because they may face legal or employment-related sanctions for doing so.

It argued that it is increasingly being recognized, in both the private and public sectors, that protection for individuals who release such information – sometimes referred to as whistleblowers – is crucial to the exposure of wrongdoing and protecting the public interest, and observed that the ADB’s Disclosure Policy does not provide protection for whistleblowers.

ARTICLE 19 stressed that proper transparency requires the ADB, like national public authorities and, increasingly, intergovernmental organizations, to accept the public’s right to know as reflected in an effective and enforceable disclosure system that meets international standards on freedom of information.

It said the present, essentially discretionary system of disclosure based on vague categories of exceptions should be replaced with a system which effectively guarantees the right to access information held by the Bank, subject only to the regime of exceptions and that in order to do this, the Bank’s Disclosure Policy needs to be further revised.

ARTICLE 19 therefore recommended that improvements be made to:

- reduce, as far as possible, the possibility of conflict between the Disclosure Policy and the Agreement Establishing the Bank by providing for the Agreement to be interpreted in accordance with the principles underlying the Policy;
- replace the existing system of exceptions with one based on the internationally accepted principles, based on a narrow list of legitimate aims, a requirement of harm and a public interest override;
• introduce process guarantees, including strict timelines for disclosure of information and a requirement that any refusals be accompanied with substantive written reasons;
• establish an independent body to review refusals by the Bank to disclose information; and
• provide whistleblower protection for Bank staff who disclose protected information, provided the disclosure was made in the reasonable belief that it disclosed wrongdoing and that it was made in good faith.

International Press Center Publishes Book On FOI

The International Press Centre in Lagos published last month a 140-page book on access to information to promote a “better understanding and greater awareness on the imperative of a freedom of information law in Nigeria.”

Entitled “FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) and Civil Society”, the content of the book is based essentially on the proceedings of five round tables and public hearings on freedom of information and civil society held in different parts of the country by the IPC and its Media-for-Democracy In Nigeria (MFD) partners between December 2001 and June 2002. The partners are Media Rights Agenda (MRA), the Independent Journalism Center (IJC) and Journalists for Democratic Rights (JODER).

The roundtables and public hearings were held in Benin (Edo State), Ibadan (Oyo State), Kaduna, Port Harcourt (Rivers State) and Abuja.

The round tables and public hearings organised with funding from the Democracy and Governance programme of the United States Embassy in Nigeria, while the book was published with the financial assistance of LO/TCO in Sweden and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in Brussels, Belgium.

IPC’s Coordinator, Mr. Lanre Arogundade, said the Center hopes that the book will help the efforts of the Freedom of Information Coalition to promote better understanding and greater awareness on the imperative of a freedom of information law in Nigeria and “how it would impact positively on the quest for accountability, transparency, good, responsible and responsive governance, sustainable development, democratic development, popular participation in governance, etc.”

The book is divided into seven chapters with contributions from Ray Ekpu, President of the Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN); Festus Iyayi of the University of Benin; Nnimmo Bassey of the Environmental Rights Action (ERA); Christopher Fajemifo of the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR); Bisi Amagada of Fountain Counselling Services (FOCOS); and Professor Ademola Popoola, of the Faculty of Law at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

Others contributors include, Sheu Sani, President of the Civil Rights Congress; Mashood Erubami, Chairman of the Campaign for Democracy (CD); Honourable Nimi-Walson Jack, Executive Director of the Center for Responsive Politics; Abubakar Mauzu of the University of Maiduguri; Ehi Uwaifoh, an Abuja-based lawyer; and Oby Nwankwo, a magistrate and Executive Director of the Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre (CIRDDOC); Bill Wyatt, of the National Conference of State Legislatures in the United States; Tive Denedo, MRA’s Director of Campaigns; and Arogundade.

More Journalists Killed This Year

The World Association of Newspapers (WAN) has said that the number of journalists killed around the world this year rose sharply over last year, an increase driven by the war in Iraq and conflicts in Colombia and other hotspots.
WAN said 51 journalists have been killed on the job or because of their work so far this year, more than in all of 2002 when the association counted 46 deaths of journalists.

The figures include all media workers killed in the line of duty or targeted because of their work, and cases where the motive is under investigation or an inquiry has not been carried out.

WAN’s director general, Mr. Timothy Balding, said: “The figure is appalling and once again underlines that governments and media organizations must do more to protect journalists wherever their duty to inform the public takes them - even to war zones.”

The Paris-based group, which represents 18,000 newspapers, said nearly one-third of the total - 16 journalists - were killed in the Iraq war and its aftermath.

The association said Colombia, where seven reporters have been killed, and the Philippines, with six deaths, also remain “among the most dangerous places for journalists.” Both nations are the site of long-running conflicts between guerrillas and the government.

WIPC, RSF Call Attention to Imprisoned Writers and Journalists Worldwide

The Writers in Prison Committee (WiPC) of International PEN and Reporters Without Borders (Reporters sans frontières, RSF) reminded the international community last month of the plight of more than 100 writers and journalists imprisoned worldwide.

WiPC marked its annual Day of the Imprisoned Writer on November 15 by focusing on 13 individuals currently serving lengthy prison terms for exercising their right to free expression. They include Burmese opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Belarusian professor Yury Bandazhevsky, Moroccan editor Ali Lmrabet and Marwan Osman, a Syrian Kurd.

PEN Centres around the world launched campaigns to raise public awareness of the 13 cases and sent letters to various governments calling for their immediate release. The campaign is also commemorating the 23 writers and journalists who have been killed since November 2002.

More detailed information on these cases is available online at: http://www.pencanada.ca/committ/events/day-imp-wri.htm

In France, RSF dedicated November 20 to the 133 journalists it says are imprisoned around the world. The group also launched a book by acclaimed photographer Helmut Newton to raise funds for its activities. It is asking media and other organisations to adopt an imprisoned journalist. Media sponsors are asked to publicise the plight of their adoptee, protest to authorities and write to the journalist in prison.

RSF said particular attention should be paid this year to the situation in Cuba, Iran, Burma, Eritrea and China. Thirty-six Internet dissidents are currently imprisoned in China, while 28 journalists in Cuba have been sentenced to jail terms ranging from 14 to 28 years.

More information on the RSF campaign can be obtained at: http://www.rsf.org

Multi-Billion Naira Libel Suits Threaten the Foundation of TheNews Magazine

The management of Independent Communications Network limited (ICNL) publishers of TheNews magazine and PM News (an evening tabloid) is presently having to contend with how to pay N2 Billion if two courts grant the prayers of their accusers. The wife of President Olusegun Obasanjo, Mrs. Stella Obasanjo and the Executive Director of the just concluded All African Games (Comite des Jeux Africains, COJA 2003) Dr. Amos Adamu have both sued ICNL for libel and are asking for N1 billion each as damages.

In her suit, Mrs. Stella Obasanjo dragged ICNL at an Abuja High Court claiming N1 billion damages for alleged libel published by The News magazine of October 27 titled “8th All
Africa Games: The Many Scandals of COJA”. Joined in the suit are the Editor-in-Chief, Bayo Onanuga; the Editor Ademola Adegbamigbe; and Bamidele Johnson a Deputy Editor and author of the story.

In her statement of claim through her lawyer, Dr. B. O. Babalakin, SAN, Mrs. Obasanjo said the publication in which it was alleged that she got a contract from COJA officials for the furnishing of the Games Village was “based entirely on speculation, unfounded and unsubstantiated allegations.”

She said she was “shocked, scandalised and horrified” by the publication. She said that all her life, particularly since the swearing-in of her husband as the President of Nigeria on May 29, 1999, she had lived an exemplary life based on the principles of “moral uprightness, integrity, abhorrence of corruption and corrupt people.”

She therefore sought that the defendants pay her the sum of N1 billion being general and exemplary damages for libel, and a perpetual injunction restraining the defendants from further publishing or causing to be published the said publication or any similar ones deemed defamatory by her.

The trial Chief Judge of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Justice L.H. Gumi, granted Mrs. Obasanjo leave to serve the writ of summons and statement of claims and fixed the case for December 17 for hearing.

In his own suit, also at an Abuja High Court, Dr. Amos Adamu claimed that the same story in the same edition of the magazine complained about by Mrs. Obasanjo defamed his character.

Joined as co-defendants in his own suit are Bayo Onanuga, Editor-in-Chief; Babafemi Ojodu, Managing Editor; Bamidele Johnson, Deputy Editor; and Timothy Igandan, a reporter.

In the suit with Number FCT/HC/CV/220/2003, Dr Adamu claimed that the magazine publications of 27th October titled “The Many Scandals Of COJA” and 24th November 2003 edition titled “Obasanjo’s Family, Atiku And Adamu In N30 Billion Scandal” respectively ridiculed and scandalized him in the eyes of the general public nationally and internationally.

In the statement of claims filed by his counsel, Prince Adetokunbo Kayode (SAN) of Kayode & Company, Adamu stated that the publications have portrayed him as a corrupt person with questionable character who is not transparent in the management of government resources and public funds. Further, he said the publication has portrayed him as a hustler who did not merit his appointment as Executive Director of the games and officials who worked under him as inefficient, incompetent and incapable of successfully discharging the onerous duty of hosting the 8th All Africa Games.

He claimed that the two publications were intended to disparage and have disparaged his reputation in the eyes of right thinking members of the public, particularly among the participating nations and international community and have also tried to destroy and injure his carefully garnered reputation and career as a civil servant.

He said as a result he has suffered tremendous emotional distress and become object of discussion and ridicule of the public since the false and malicious publications were made.

In addition to the damages, Dr. Adamu also sought for a perpetual injunction restraining the defendants by themselves, their servants and agents from further publication of the said defamatory words or words of the like against him.

If ICNL is unfortunate to lose any of the case and the presiding judge awards the damage ICNL will close shop. The situation with the Nigerian libel laws do not help matters. While limitations are placed on the circumstances in which public officers can successfully maintain libel suits against media houses in respect of news, or comments on matters of public interest in some national courts and in the jurisprudence of human rights bodies, no such law exists in Nigeria’s statute books. In contrast the awards tend to be aggravated when the matters concerns public officers.
Experts Undertake Mission To Liberia To Assess State of Media

A team of media and free expression experts from around the world will undertake a mission to Liberia from December 11 to 16 to assess the state of the media in that country and propose measures for redressing the inadequacies.

The mission will establish the framework for media capacity building interventions by way of legal reforms, infrastructure development, training programmes and logistics support for the media.

The decision to undertake the mission was taken at a meeting of stakeholders held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in October. The mission is being conducted under the auspices of the Partnership for Media and Conflict Prevention in West Africa.

Members of the team are Professor Kwame Karikari, the Executive Director of the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) in Accra, Ghana; Mr. Jesper Højberg, the Executive Director of the International Media Support (IMS) in Copenhagen; Miss Fatou Jagne, Africa Programme Officer at ARTICLE 19, the Global Campaign for Free Expression, in London; Mr. Edetaen Ojo, the Executive Director of Media Rights Agenda (MRA) in Lagos; Mr. Wellington Gevevon Smith, a Programme Officer at MFWA; and Ms Diana Senghor, the Executive Director of Panos Institute West Africa (PIWA), based in Dakar, Senegal.

Other members are Ms. Kristina Dahlman of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in Paris, France; Mr. Christian Clark of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) in New York; Ms Dale Ratcliffe of the International Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX) and Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE) in Toronto, Canada; Mr. Bertrand Ginet, project officer at the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in Brussels, Belgium; Mr. Thomas Hughes, also of IMS; and Ms Catherine Fiankan-Bokonga of Media Action International (MAI), based in Geneva, Switzerland.

The mission members have been selected according to the required expertise in the areas that need to be addressed. These include media and conflict (including safety and humanitarian information); media associations and self-regulation; legal reform and regulatory bodies; the broadcast media; the print media, including distribution; and professional training.

Members of the team of experts will meet with media owners and managers; journalists and other media practitioners; regulatory bodies and professional associations; government/public service officials and opposition/rebel representatives, where possible; media-related NGOs and other civil society organisations; as well as journalism scholars, teachers, training institutions and libraries.

The rationale for the mission is that based upon an expert assessment of the options for media development and conflict resolution in Liberia, rapid and collaborative activities addressing a broad range of issues with long-term perspective will be agreed upon under the auspices of the partnership.

Following a regional “Partnership initiative on media and peace in West Africa” planning meeting held in Accra from July 8 to 10, 2003, the participants came together to form the “Partnership for Media and Conflict Prevention in West Africa”.

It has become a common feature for public officers to institute multimillion and multibillion Naira suits against media houses for alleged libel. Prominent among such was the suits by the disgraced former Speaker of the first House of Representatives of this fourth Republic, Alhaji Salisu Buhari who in July 1999 sued the ICNL for N500 Million damages alleging libel. Three companies owned by him also sued the media house in like sums bringing the total to N2 Billion. Fortunately he could not sustain any of the suits.
The strategy document for the partnership was completed at a meeting of the regional and international partners held in Copenhagen on October 7 and 8, this year.

The objective of the partnership is to facilitate the provision of rapid and collaborative support to the media to pre-empt and mitigate conflicts and their humanitarian consequences. The partnership utilises the diverse expertise and resources available amongst national, regional and international stakeholders, thereby offering a unique approach for the provision of assistance.

The rationale for this is that through such holistic interventions, programmes relevant to local needs and reflecting the objectives of international institutions can be designed and implemented covering the broad spectrum of media related concerns that may arise as a result of conflict.

Besides, the variety of stakeholders involved in the partnership provides a wide spectrum of potential approaches, from UN agencies to regional media associations and local civil society actors. The collaborative process is therefore intended to enhance the potential impact and create stronger sustainability options for activities, through ensuring long-term perspectives based upon strong local ownership and the division of tasks between long and short term international actors.

The mission to Liberia will:

- Conduct a review of the media situation in Liberia and the effects of the conflict on the media;
- Compile a list of the main national, regional and international stakeholders in Liberia, including a comprehensive overview of their previous, current and planned activities in the area of the media;
- Produce a list of priority areas clearly outlining both immediate and development related recommendations for support to the media and humanitarian information needs, including proposed activities and funding requirements; and
- Access and document existing media laws, regulatory provisions and policy frameworks in order to promote legislative reform and the development of a new and comprehensive communications policy for Liberia.

The expected output of the mission will be a comprehensive report that establishes the needs of the media in Liberia during the transition. The document will provide recommended paths for assisting in the rehabilitation and development of the media in Liberia.

The first phase of the assessment is being carried out as a desk study undertaken by the Media Foundation for West Africa. The desk study is based upon available existing documentation about the structure and state of the media in Liberia.

Following the conclusion of the desk study, the mission is being undertaken as part of a field study which will be based upon individual interviews and observations and during which members of the team of experts will meet with media owners and managers; journalists and other media practitioners; regulatory bodies and professional associations; government/public service officials and opposition/rebel representatives, where possible; media-related NGOs and other civil society organisations; as well as journalism scholars, teachers, training institutions and libraries.

At the end of the mission, the team will produce a joint report based on the desk study and field trip to Liberia.

Over the past 14 years, Liberia has been plagued by a civil conflict, which has severely damaged the infrastructure base and undermined the social fabric of its three million citizens. The mass media institutions and practitioners have been among the worst victims of the campaign of terror, plunder and arbitrariness that have defined the political order in Liberia, particularly since 1997.

The protracted civil conflict that beleaguered former President Charles Taylor’s seven-year rule was frequently used as a pretext to arrest independent journalists, shut down radio
stations, and censor programmes and publications on grounds of “national security”. In particular, critical journalists, independent media proprietors and vocal freedom of expression advocates were repeatedly incarcerated, tortured and forced into exile. Private newspapers and radio stations were routinely seized, vandalised and closed down or forced by stringent financial requirements to liquidate.

There is almost no independent media institution or journalist in Liberia that has not been attacked since Taylor came to power. This has led to a massive displacement and flight into exile, of most of the country’s trained journalists. The few that dared to remain in the country were either forced to practice self-censorship, or else they suffered relentless intimidation and torture.

The years of economic mismanagement, looting and destruction of media infrastructure have also taken their toll on the financial viability of the Liberian media. With very low readerships and a virtually non-existent advertisement base, most of the independent newspapers and radio stations have either had to operate on shoestring budgets, or pander to the dictates of politicians and the patronage of unscrupulous business executives. Invariably, the poor salaries of most editors and reporters have also constrained them to compromise on their ethical and professional obligations for independent and objective reporting.

Laws or regulations were also passed to obstruct newspapers and radio stations critical of the government. The use of restraining press laws and controls to censor or close down media houses remains a looming threat to the media, if they are not abolished or reviewed.

The situation has resulted in an urgent need for media capacity building interventions by way of legal reforms, infrastructure development, training programmes and logistics support.

This is particularly urgent given that a functional and professionally oriented media system will be a central factor in any programme of peace building, social reconstruction and national reconciliation in Liberia. The media would be necessary for the cultivation of the culture of public accountability, rule of law and democracy. Available and universally accessible media institutions can also broker the processes of social re-negotiation across ethnic divisions in the country.

However, a disabled media cannot be expected to effectively support any institution-building, governance and development programmes.

Although over the years, a number of media support and advocacy organisations have organised or collaborated in advocacy programmes and provided backstopping support to sustain a media presence in the country, because of the retributive nature of the Taylor regime, and because Liberia had effectively become an international pariah, most of these interventions ceased or were made at arm’s length.

Few organisations could hope to venture into Liberia or conduct any empirical assessment and determination of the problems and needs of the media industry and institution. The exit of the Charles Taylor regime has now raised new hopes for peace and the survival, rehabilitation and development of the country’s media.

**New Report Details Growing Censorship and Control of the Internet**

A new report entitled Silenced, published by Privacy International and the GreenNet Educational Trust suggests that Internet censorship is common around the world and that efforts to stifle online free speech are becoming increasingly effective.

Researchers who conducted the survey have found that restrictions on Internet activity, as well as government secrecy and communications surveillance, have reached an unprecedented level across the globe.

Silenced is an independent research initiative managed jointly by Privacy International and the GreenNet Educational Trust. The 12-month project was undertaken through a
collaboration of more than 50 experts and advocates throughout the world through a grant from the Open Society Institute (OSI).

According to the report, the Internet has evolved to become an increasingly important platform not just for economic development, but also as a support for advocates who wish to express their opinion freely and to work toward the development of democracy.

It noted that the medium has provided opportunities for citizens to participate in forums, and to discuss and debate issues that concern them because unlike other media where the information flow is unidirectional - from the government to the masses - the Internet allowed a multi-way communication process giving the chance for anybody to air their opinions and views on issues affecting them.

But despite the fact that the development of the Internet has led to more horizontal and less vertical communication, control and censorship has a substantial effect on the Internet because it undermines confidence and trust in the medium and inhibits crucial flows of data.

The study found that censorship of the Internet is commonplace in most regions of the world and revealed that in most countries, over the past two years there has been an acceleration of efforts to either close down or inhibit the Internet.

According to the report, in some countries, such as China and Burma, the level of control is such that the Internet has relatively little value as a medium for organised free speech, and its use creates additional dangers at a personal level for activists.

The report said the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre and other American interests have given numerous governments the opportunity to promulgate restrictive policies that their citizens had previously opposed with the result that there has been an acceleration of legal authority for additional snooping of all kinds, particularly involving the Internet, from increased email monitoring to the retention of Web logs and communications data.

Simultaneously, it noted, governments have become more secretive about their own activities, reducing information that was previously available and refusing to adhere to policies on freedom of information.

The report observed that the governments of developing nations rely on Western countries to supply them with the necessary technologies of surveillance and control, such as digital wiretapping equipment, deciphering equipment, scanners, bugs, tracking equipment and computer intercept systems.

It added that without the aid of this technology transfer, it is unlikely that non-democratic regimes could impose the current levels of control over Internet activity.

The report said the transfer of surveillance technology from First to Third world was now a lucrative sideline for the arms industry.

According to the report, one of the most important trends in recent years is the growth of multinational corporate censors whose agendas are very different from those of governments.

It said: “It is arguable that in the first decade of the 21st century, corporations will rival governments in threatening Internet freedoms. Some American cable companies seek to turn the Internet into a controlled distribution medium like TV and radio, and are putting in place the necessary technological changes to the Internet’s infrastructure to do so.” The report also revealed that aggressive protection of corporate intellectual property has resulted in substantial legal action against Internet users with a corresponding deterioration in trust across the Internet.

It outlines a wide variety of methods used to restrict or regulate Internet access. These include: applying laws and licenses, content filtering, tapping and surveillance, pricing and taxation policies, telecommunication markets manipulation, hardware and software manipulation and self censorship.

But the report also admitted that there were some positive developments revealed by the survey. These include the fact that some countries have established protections, other countries have enshrined protections, companies have fought for the rights of privacy of individuals, the
technologies have sustained the ability of dissident groups to speak freely and access content privately, and differences in laws in some countries have sheltered the speech of the oppressed.

But it said although technological developments were being implemented to protect a free Internet, “the knowledge gap between radical innovators and restrictive institutions appears to be closing.”

**African Librarians Seek Improved Access to Foreign Journals**

For many libraries in Africa without access to foreign journals, the problem may be one of a lack of communication rather than a lack of resources, according to a seminar for librarians which made proposals to redress the inadequacies.

The event, which took place on November 8, was held in conjunction with a meeting of the West African branch of the Standing Conference of African Universities in Accra, Ghana, found that although many university libraries were no longer able to afford any international journals at their standard rate, awareness of opportunities to acquire them at special discounts, or even free of charge, is limited.

Results of a survey by Sara Gwynn, of the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), suggested that several factors were inhibiting universities from taking advantage of existing opportunities.

According to the survey report, some schemes overlap, others are not well communicated or targeted, do not fully take local needs into account, or fail to offer the long-term commitments necessary to build capacity.

Such problems are sometimes compounded by management problems within recipient institutions, and practical issues such as the availability of foreign currency, while there is also a need for schemes to cover paper and CD-ROM versions, as well as electronic access.

The seminar was organised by INASP, the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and BookAid International, all of which organise support schemes.

According to ACU’s Deborah Bennett, the potential for cooperation is immense. She said: “There is a great deal of goodwill from both donors and publishers to help, but a critical need to work together. Moreover, the need is greater now than for many years - several universities reported that they had withdrawn from journal purchases, or were in danger of doing so.”

As a next step, the organisers of the seminar hope to convene a meeting of publishers and other organisations in the next few months, and were interested in receiving further expressions of interest.

BookAid International and the ACU are also working on proposals to promote their programmes jointly with effect from next year.

More than 500 universities in 35 countries and regions around the Commonwealth are members of the ACU. It is registered as a charity and controlled by its member institutions through its Council. In 1963 it received a royal charter and its patron is the Queen of England, Elizabeth II, who is also Head of the Commonwealth.

**Broadcasters To Discuss Challenges of the Information Society**

Radio and television leaders from five continents will meet in Geneva, Switzerland from December 9 to 11, 2003 to highlight the essential role of media in building tomorrow’s world.

Public and private broadcasters are joining forces to find the best way to meet the challenge of the Information Society.

Swiss authorities, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), and SRG SSR idée suisse, the Swiss national broadcaster, formed an Association of the “World Electronic Media Forum” (WEMF), under the aegis of the United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI).
Mr. Kofi Annan, the UN secretary general, and Pascal Couchepin, Swiss president who is also the president of the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), will speak during the WEMF opening session on December 9. Five heads of major radio and television companies, each representing one of the main regions of the world, will follow.

A joint declaration adopted by the main broadcasting organizations around the world will be officially given to Mr. Annan and President Couchepin so that they can pass it on to the heads of State and government attending the WSIS.

With a nine-language Internet website (www.wemfmmedia.org) and the latest technology, from webstreaming to High Definition television, satellite and videoconferencing, the debates in Geneva will include listeners and viewers from around the world.

The interactive sessions will highlight three themes, namely “World violence, media violence”; “Media freedom in the Information Society”; and “Media influence of the world agenda”.

Ten workshops will cover such subjects as: Radio-TV and the new media; e-training for journalists, cultural diversity, public service and commercial broadcasting, quality certification in broadcasting, broadcasting and health, etc.

The Forum will result in a radio-TV action plan for the information society.

More information about the meeting and registrations procedures can be obtained through: Telephone +41 (0)22 717 20 23; e-mail : info@wemfmmedia.org; or through the website: www.wemfmmedia.org

Civil Society Organisations Dialogue with Commonwealth Governments in London

Over 60 senior officials from about 40 Commonwealth member governments met for the first time last month with representatives of Commonwealth associations and civil society organisations (CSOs) for a dialogue at Marlborough House, London, headquarters of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Ambassador T Daniel Hart of Nigeria chaired the meeting, which took place on November 11, the day before a meeting of the Committee of the Whole, one of the key preparatory meetings for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) taking place in Abuja on December 5 to 8, 2003.

The dialogue sought to bring to the attention of the officials the contributions of CSOs to development and democracy, and to increase their understanding of the support required for maximising civil society’s contribution. The meeting also identified key issues to inform the senior officials’ discussions on Commonwealth functional co-operation.

Representatives from civil society presented key messages from a synthesis of six preparatory regional consultations around the Commonwealth, held between May and July this year. They emphasised the diversity of civil society to include, although not limited to, conventional non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based, faith-based, and traditional organisations.

They expressed strong support for the values of the Commonwealth, including its commitment to human rights, transparency, and the partnership of governments and civil society.

Specifically, the meeting recognised that to be more effective partners, CSOs need to strengthen their capacity, networks and governance systems, and called upon Commonwealth governments, the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth Secretariat to support this endeavour.

The CSOs stressed the need for governments to provide a supportive and inclusive environment for strengthening and sustaining their programmes, noting that CSOs are expected to act as a bridge between governments and society but in many cases were not empowered or resourced to do so.
They called on national governments to provide financial and other resources and incentives to support the work of CSOs and urged Commonwealth governments, the Foundation and the Secretariat to support efforts to build these partnerships.

Recognising that there were many other issues for functional co-operation by CSOs in the Commonwealth, the issues of HIV/AIDS and its impact on women, trafficking and slavery, young people, fair terms of trade and debt, and implementation of international agreements were also highlighted.

The senior officials welcomed the presentation by civil society representatives and affirmed the important role that civil society plays as partners in development and democracy. They, however, raised concerns around the issue of governance of CSOs, with regard in particular to transparency and accountability and called for the development of a code of conduct for civil society.

They also raised concerns about the effect of direct funding of civil society organisations by external governments and the potential impact of such funding on CSOs’ agendas and foreign relations.

The senior officials recommended that CSOs contribute to this partnership by creating knowledge, being more vocal on such issues as racism, migration, debt, refugees, climate change, women, and poverty alleviation, and working with governments to support programmes such as the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), anti-malaria campaigns, climate change, and peace and security.

They called for more structured issue-specific dialogues that would result in long-term strategic partnerships and collaborative programmes, as well as the mainstreaming of CSOs in Commonwealth discussions and programmes. They, therefore, recommended that the dialogue with civil society be formalised and institutionalised as part of CHOGM processes.

Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon said: “This is a very important meeting - the first time there has been direct interaction between civil society organisations and Commonwealth governments. This interaction is the latest milestone in the process of dialogue between the ‘official’ and the ‘non-official’ Commonwealth that has been building up since the Coolum CHOGM in 2002.”

Civicus To Hold Fifth Biennial World Assembly In March 2004

CIVICUS will hold its Fifth Biennial World Assembly in Gaborone, Botswana, from March 21 to 25, 2004, a forum which will bring civil society representatives from around the world to discuss the theme “Acting Together for a Just World.”

The World Assembly is a primary venue for civil society and other stakeholders to exchange information about their achievements and challenges. At this year’s Assembly, hundreds of citizen groups and CIVICUS members will explore options to enhance citizen engagement in decision-making at all levels of governance, and examine issues of social and economic justice in a globalised world.

Through learning exchanges and plenary sessions, participants will look at ways to strengthen the governance and legitimacy of civil society organisations and defend the rights of civic association.

Previous World Assemblies have taken place in Mexico, Hungary, Philippines and Canada.

There will be four main themes at this year’s World Assembly. They are: Civic Justice (fuelling civic energy); Economic Justice (livelihood insecurity: innovative solutions seeking to open doors); Political Justice (democratising power: civic engagement in decision-making); and Social Justice (keeping the peace or fanning the flames).
Cross-cutting themes at the Assembly will include HIV/AIDS; gender equity and equality; youth empowerment; capacity-building; and socially marginalised groups.

CIVICUS convenes the World Assembly as a part of its vision and mission to enhance citizen participation through civic existence, civic expression and civic engagement.

This is founded on its belief that citizen groups are a vital force in changing the world, and gatherings such as the World Assembly allow civil society to discuss and exchange ideas through active and engaged learning.

It also believes that the World Assembly is important because it is a place where civil society groups from around the world can look at successful models for advancing national, regional and global agendas.

More information about the World Assembly may be obtained from CIVICUS website at: http://www.civicus.org or by sending an email to David Kalete, the Programmes Director at: worldassembly@civicus.org.

Conference Holds On Transnational Risks And Media Responsibility

A nine-day conference which will explore how knowledge about global issues is gathered, packaged and distributed by transnational organisations and whether the public is being denied full access to relevant information about risks to their freedoms or quality of life will take place in Berlin, Germany, in January 2004.

The conference, titled “Transnational Risks - the Responsibility of the Media and the Social Sciences” and scheduled for January 2 to 10, will also attempt to determine what kind of information or assumptions currently guide political responses to transnational risks.

Thirty young journalists and academics from across Africa and the rest of the developing world will debate the issues at a colloquium ahead of the main conference. Participants are expected to deliver papers on examples of how knowledge about risks can easily be monopolised by powerful players such as multinationals, international organisations, media or armies.

They will then debate practical ways to “set free” information that is currently withheld from critical journalists, non-governmental organisations or even the people who are directly affected by the risks.

The colloquium forms part of the Irmgard Coninx Foundation’s regular Berlin Roundtables. The roundtables are designed to provide a forum for young international academics and journalists - especially from developing countries, to discuss the political and social challenges facing a global civil society.

Further information about the conference can be obtained from the Irmgard Coninx Foundation website at: http://www.irmgard-coninx-stiftung.de/en/roundtables/roundtables.htm or by sending an email to: workshop@coninxstiftung.de

Media Caucus Criticizes WSIS Process for Failing to Affirm Free Expression

The Media Caucus at the preparatory meetings of the forthcoming World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva have again criticized the lack of political will in reaffirming freedom of expression and press freedom in the summit’s draft texts.

The Media Caucus, whose members include the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in Brussels, Belgium; ARTICLE 19, the Global Campaign for Free Expression, in London; the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) in Windhoek, Namibia; and the World Press Freedom Committee, expressed “profound distress” last month over the latest round of WSIS inter-governmental negotiations (PrepCom3A).
They noted that as at November 14, only a few weeks to the WSIS, governments had refused to fully affirm Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the draft texts of the WSIS declaration and action plan.

The Media Caucus regretted that there was also a lack of agreement over designating the media as a stakeholder in the Information Society.

The caucus also expressed shock over the WSIS summit organisers’ decision to deny accreditation to freelance journalists.

The IFJ said freelance journalists not attached to a particular news outlet are being barred from the summit because organizers insist that all journalists prove they are on assignment from a specific news organization.

**ATTACKS ON THE PRESS IN NOVEMBER 2003**

Federal Government Expels and Bans Journalists From Airport

Journalists covering the aviation beat at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMIA), Lagos were on November 20 expelled from the airport and banned from returning to the beat until the return of Queen Elizabeth II and her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh who will be visiting Nigeria when she will host the Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting (CHOGM) holding in Abuja from December 5 to 8.

The chief of security of the airport, Alhaji Bako told the journalists that they would not be allowed to use the facilities until the state visit ends. The Queen and the Duke are expected in Nigeria on December 4.

The CSO reportedly told aviation reporters that the gates leading to the airport and the press centre and the VIP lounge would be locked and that reporters would not be allowed to park their cars or do anything around the car park at the presidential wing of the airport which the newsmen normally use. He was quoted as further saying that security operatives who will be on guard have been instructed to deal ruthlessly with anybody who flouted the order and that his instructions were a result of the meetings he held with the president, the special adviser on aviation and the special adviser on media affairs.

The journalists were informed that they would be allowed to return to their beat after the visit and that journalists who wish to interview the Queen or Duke should outside the airport. Regular staff at the VIP lounge were however not barred from the premises during the visit.

Daily Sun Reporter Arrested and Detained

Four policemen on November 21 at about 9.45am stormed a public function in Makurdi where they forcefully arrested Mr. Uja Emmanuel, the Benue State correspondent of Daily Sun Newspapers in lieu of his colleague who wrote a story that alleged a girl committed suicide because she was asked to repeat a class.

The policemen who effected his arrest ordered Mr. Emmanuel to leave the venue and go with them to the State Police Station at Waparatha ignoring the plea by the chairman of the correspondent chapel, Mr Terna Doks of the Crystal Magazine to allow Uja attend the function before reporting at the police station. The plain clothes detective bundled Uja into a waiting Peugeot 504 station wagon and sped off to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID).

Over 20 correspondents in the town led by their Chairman later stormed the Benue State Police Command headquarters, protesting his forceful arrest and detention and demanded the immediate release of their colleague. They told the state CID Boss that the matter was within court jurisdiction if the father of the deceased felt aggrieved by the story. He was later released on self-recognition and asked to produce Murphy Ganagana of the Abuja office of Daily Sun on November 26. The police believe Mr. Ganagana wrote the said story.
Three Editors Arrested, Detained and Charged

Three editors of Insider Weekly news magazine were on November 24 at about 2.00 p.m. arrested from their office on Acme Road, Agidingbi area of Ikeja by men of the State Criminal Investigation Department (CIDS) Panti. They were taken to Panti Police Station in Yaba where they were detained and on the 26th they were arraigned on a three-count charge of conspiracy to publish seditious matter, sedition and criminal defamation at a Yaba Magistrates’ Court.

Those arrested, detained and charged are the magazine’s Editor-in-Chief, Mr. Osa Director; and two executive editors, Mrs Janet Mba-Afolabi and Chuks Onwudinjo. Their arrest was sequel to the magazine’s lead story in its November 24 edition titled “Aso Rock’s Oil Bunkering Scandal: Atiku, Gusau Linked – 8 Arrested Ships to be Destroyed,” which alleged that top government officials were involved in shady oil deals. At the court, they pleaded not guilty to the charges and the judge adjourned the case until January 12 while granting them bail.

The charge sheet read that the accused conspired to publish seditious matter against the Vice President of Nigeria Abubakar Atiku and the National Security adviser to President Obasanjo, General Aliyu Muhammad Gusau, Rtd, thereby committing a criminal defamation, an offence punishable under Sections 518 (6), 511 (c) and 375 of the Criminal Code, Cap. 77, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 1990.

After taking their plea in which the journalists pleaded not guilty, the presiding magistrate granted them bail of the sum of N200,000 (about $1,515) or one surety each. The matter was adjourned till January 12, 2004, further hearing.

The law on sedition has actually been expunged from the nation’s statute book, having been declared unconstitutional.

The magazine, in a press statement signed by its Managing Editor, Obed A. Awowede, titled, “Plot to Eliminate Insider Weekly Editors,” alleged that the magazine had information that the magazine had been branded opposition to government and penciled to be “crushed at all costs”, and that before the arrest, “top level security officials and politicians have canvassed the use of orthodox and unorthodox means” to kill the publication. The magazine expressed its concern over alleged government officials canvassing the use of unorthodox means which it fears may include kidnap, torture and assassinations.

Two Journalists, Others Arrested over Publication

Two journalists and two other citizens were on November 26 arrested by men of the Nigerian Police in Ekiti State for being in possession of copies of a newspaper published with the alleged intention to damage the reputation of the state’s governor, Mr Ayo Fayose.

The journalists arrested are Mr Kayode Fasua, editor of Contact newspaper partially owned by the state government, and Mr Tunde Ajayi, editor of Class newspaper based in Akure, the Ondo State capital.

The other two citizens are Mr Dada Michael, of the state judiciary and Mrs Bola Fatile, a staff of the Ministry of Justice.

The Assistant Police Commissioner in Charge of CID, Mr Emmanuel Zanu paraded them before newsmen at the Police Headquarters, saying they were arrested based on the information the Police received to the effect that a certain newspaper called Ekiti Razor was being conveyed to the state for circulation and that the publication contained inciting materials that could jeopardise the peace and order in the state.

Zanu said the four of them were accosted at a police-mounted road block where many copies of alleged inciting publication were discovered in their vehicle. Mr. Zanu said further that investigations showed that one Femi Ojo now at large was the sponsor of the publication adding that the suspects will be charged to court immediately investigations are concluded on the matter.
Journalist Beaten And Threatened

Journalist Psaro Yornamue, bureau chief of the Rivers State office of the Daily Independent newspaper, was beaten and threatened after writing an article alleging corruption by the deputy governor of Rivers State and the majority leader of the Rivers State house of assembly.

Following the publication of the article entitled “Rivers deputy governor in N20m contract scam” on November 14, 2003, Psaro Yornamue received several threats, including from the personal assistant to the deputy governor on media affairs and the majority leader of the Rivers State house of assembly.

On November 21, while he was on his way to his office, he was accosted by some unidentified men suspected to be security agents who bundled him into a Peugeot car and questioned him about the source of his story. He was beaten by the men, who threatened him again and warned him that his life would be at risk if he did not cease his criticisms of the deputy governor.

MEDIA / PRESS FREEDOM AWARDS

Series On Hezbollah Wins $20,000 International Investigative Reporting Award

A two-part investigative report that revealed the inner workings of the Shiite terrorist group, Hezbollah, and its global reach was last month announced winner of the 2003 ICIJ Award for Outstanding International Investigative Reporting. The Award carries a $20,000 prize reward.

The ICIJ Award for Outstanding International Investigative Reporting is presented annually by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, a project of the Center for Public Integrity, which is based in Washington DC.

Jeffrey Goldberg was announced winner of this year’s award on November 20 for his New Yorker series, “In the Party of God.” In investigating the story, Mr. Goldberg traveled throughout Lebanon, Syria and Israel, and met with Hezbollah’s spiritual leader Sayidd Fadlallah. His investigation also took him to the border crossroads of Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina, now considered to be the “center of Middle Eastern terrorism in South America.” He visited the town of Cuidad del Este, a major fundraising center for Hezbollah and al Qaeda, in search of the man once considered by United States officials to be the world’s most dangerous terrorist.

The story eventually led Goldberg to North Carolina, where a Hezbollah cell was involved in a cigarette smuggling scheme to raise money for Hezbollah headquarters in Lebanon.

A five-judge panel of international journalists awarded Goldberg the first-place prize of $20,000 and called his winning entry “a model of top-quality investigative journalism and the kind of important work that the ICIJ Award was created to honor.”

“His outstanding reporting skills, elegant writing and exceptional courage have shed light on Hezbollah, one of the most secretive and dangerous groups in the world,” the judges said in their commendation. “As Goldberg followed the strands of the organization to the Bekaa Valley, southern Lebanon, to Israel and Syria, to Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina, and, even to North Carolina, he revealed a sophisticated global organization, whose power is by no means concentrated among a small group of extremists.”

The judges also selected five entries from four countries to receive $1,000 finalists’ awards. The finalists for the sixth annual ICIJ award are:

- Mzilikazi wa Afrika and Jessica Bezuidenhout of the Sunday Times of South Africa, for their nine-part series, exposing bribery and corruption at the heart of South Africa’s first forestry
privatization deal. The series resulted in the cancellation of the deal by the government and the reopening of the bidding process.

Nick Fielding and Yosri Fouda of The Sunday Times of Britain for “Masterminds of 9/11 Reveal Terror Secrets,” which included face-to-face interviews with two of the principal organizers of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States - Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, chairman of al Qaeda’s military committee, and Ramzi Binalshibh, chief coordinator of the hijackers and close personal friend of Mohammed Atta, one of the terrorist hijackers.

Walter F. Roche, Jr. and Willoughby Mariano of The Baltimore Sun and The Orlando Sentinel for their series “Indentured in America,” which tells the story of smuggled workers from Micronesia and the Marshall Islands who are enticed to the US with promises of high-paying jobs, but end up working in squalid conditions for little money and living packed together in decrepit apartments.

Tim Sandler, Chris Hansen and Allan Maraynes of Dateline NBC for “Slaves to Fashion?” a yearlong investigation into illegal child labour in India’s silk industry and its multimillion dollar connection to American retailers. The report produced an influx of donations to non-profit organizations working with children sold into bonded slavery in India.

Staff reporters at China’s Caijing magazine, which produced a five-part series and four supplements on SARS, severe acute respiratory syndrome, even as the Chinese government and other media were silent on the deadly disease. The articles detailed not only the path of the disease itself, but its implications for China’s government and society.

The ICIJ Award for Outstanding International Investigative Reporting was created to honour international investigative reporting. Presented by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, a project of the Center for Public Integrity, the annual award is made possible by a grant from The John and Florence Newman Foundation of San Antonio, Texas.

The competition for the 2003 award attracted 56 entries from 19 countries, involving reporting in 70 countries.

Any professional journalist or team of journalists of any nationality working in print, broadcast or online media may apply for the award. In keeping with the transnational emphasis of the ICIJ award, eligible investigations must involve reporting in at least two countries.

More details of this year’s ICIJ award winner and finalists, as well as information on how to apply for the 2004 award can be obtained from the ICIJ Web site at www.icij.org

CPJ Presents Press Freedom Award Winners in Washington


The recipients of the Awards, presented on November 20, include: Abdul Samay Hamed, an independent writer, publisher, political cartoonist, and poet from Afghanistan; Aboubakr Jamai, who publishes two of Morocco’s groundbreaking weekly newspapers, Le Journal Hebdomadaire and its sister publication, Assahifa al Ousbouiya; Musa Muradov, editor-in-chief of the weekly Groznensky Rabochy, one of Chechnya’s only independent publications; and Manuel Vázquez Portal, who helped establish the independent news agency Grupo de Trabajo Decoro and is serving an 18-year prison sentence in Cuba on spurious charges.

CPJ’s Executive Director, Ann Cooper, said in introducing the awardees: “The work of these four brave journalists is driven by their devotion to the fundamental principles of press freedom - the principle that all people have the right to seek and receive news and information.”

Speaking about the dangers he faces while covering the conflict in Chechnya, Muradov said: “It’s very difficult running a newspaper when you’re stuck between two warring factions. You can become an enemy very easily depending on what you write.”
Jamai, whose newspapers have published tough investigative reports on government corruption and corporate impropriety, have run afoul of both the government and the Moroccan king. He said: “In Morocco, you cannot criticize the king because he’s considered sacred and yet he represents the executive branch of the government.”

At the press conference, Hamed described Afghanistan as a county with “no freedom of expression.” He urged journalists who cover his country to report on the lack of press freedom.

Speaking at the event, CPJ’s Washington, D.C., representative Frank Smyth noted that, “There does not appear to be any particular reason why the regime targeted this journalist, except that his reporting and well written, often lyrical, opinion columns have been consistently critical of the regime.”

All four journalists were also honoured on November 25 at an awards dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City, where John F. Burns, the chief foreign correspondent of The New York Times, also received the Burton Benjamin Memorial Award, which is given for a lifetime of distinguished achievement for the cause of press freedom. The Burton Benjamin Award is named after the late CBS News senior producer and former CPJ chairman, who died in 1988.

Alfred Friendly Press Fellowships Invite Applications.

Applications are invited from journalist with independent print media organizations in developing or transitional countries for the Alfred Friendly Press Fellowship. (AFPF)

AFBF brings approximately 12 mid-career reporters and editors- usually between the ages of 25 and 35 to America for a six-month, in-depth, practical introduction to the professional and ethical standards of the U.S. print media. AFPF offers these working fellowships to non-U.S. print journalists from developing and transitional countries with an emerging free press.

An applicant must have an excellent command of written and spoken English, early to mid-career status, with at least three years experience as a print journalist, a demonstrated commitment to a career in journalism in the home country, and current employment as a journalist with an independent print media organization in a developing or transitional country.

The fellowship covers all costs of program-related international and domestic U.S. travel, and provides a monthly stipend. The program begins in June with a two-week orientation seminar in Washington, followed by five-month deployment to U.S. host newspapers.

Applications are available in September and are due February 1 for the program beginning in June of that year. Contact: Alfred Friendly Press Fellowships, 1616 H Street, NW, Third Floor, Washington, DC 20006; Tel: (202) 737-4414; Fax: (202) 737-4416; E-mail: info@pressfellowships.org Web site: http://www.pressfellowships.org

Deadline for submission of completed application is February 1

Kiplinger Programme Fellowship in Public Affairs Journalism

The Ohio State University School of Journalism and Communication invites mid-career journalists for the Kiplinger Programme Fellowship, a 12-month masters degree in journalism.

At least eight fellows will receive full tuition plus a stipend of $22,500. Fellows take graduate courses at the university, produce a policy project, participate in a reporting trip to Washington, D.C., and work with undergraduate journalism students.

Applicants must have a bachelor's degree and at least three years of journalism experience.

Further information can be obtained from Thomas Schwartz, Kiplinger, Professor, School of Journalism and Communication, The Ohio State University, Derby Hall 3016, 154 N. Oval Mall, Columbus, OH 43210; Tel: (614) 292-1006; E-mail: kip-program@osu.edu; Web Site: http://www.kiplingerprogram.com.

Applicants should submit their completed application forms before February 1.
Joan Shorenstein Fellowship on the Press, Politics and Public Policy

The Joan Shorenstein Fellowship is available for domestic or international journalists, scholars, and/or policymakers who are interested in the influence of the press on public policy and politics.

The programme is a one semester research fellowship at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. Fellows participate in seminars with scholars, a speakers series with invited journalists or policymakers, and in other organized programs of the Shorenstein Center and Harvard University.

The fellowship is not a degree or training programme. Applicants must be fluent in reading, writing and speaking English. Fellows are required to live in resident for one semester. A stipend of $15,000/semester would be made available to successful fellows.

Further information about application procedure can be obtained from Joan Shorenstein Center, Kennedy School of Government, 79 JFK Street, Cambridge, MA 02138; Tel: (617) 495 8269; Fax: (617) 495-8696; E-mail: edith_holway@harvard.edu; Web site: http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/presspol/fellowship/fellowship.htm

Deadline for completed application is February 1.

JFC Launches Religious Writing Award In Nigeria

Journalists for Christ (JFC) with support of Church Growth Services, Lagos has instituted awards for religious reporting / writing to encourage better reporting of Christian religious issues in the Nigerian media.

The award meant to be an annual event would be given for different categories of Christian religious writing, publications and broadcast. JFC is headed by Lekan Otufodunrin, a member of the World Association for Christian Communication.

The categories would include Religious Writer of the year, Best Church Community Development Report of the year, Christian Magazine of the year, Christian Newspapers, Christian Programme of the year (Radio), Best Christian Programme (T.V) and Best Media Friendly Church or Ministry etc.

The Religious writer of the year category is to be sponsored by Church Growth Services with a cash prize of N25,000 and book gifts while sponsorship for other categories are being sought.

The first award ceremony would be held early next year for 2003 winners.

The Religious writing awards is to honour journalists who write about Christianity in the media with accuracy and fairness in a way that seeks to build the Church of Nigeria.

The award is open to Nigerian journalists and media organizations including freelancers working in Nigeria for media organizations. Interested journalists are encouraged to submit two reports published/broadcast between January 1-December 30, 2003. All entries must be accompanied with the applicant’s CV and a covering letter, which must be received on or before January 10, 2004.

Entries would be judged based on the quality of reports, depth of coverage and clear understanding of issues reported about. An independent panel of judges with requisite knowledge and experience will review and choose winners.

All entries should be sent to The Administrative Secretary, Journalists for Christ, P.O.Box, 15399, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria. Email: jfcmembers@yahoo.com

Journalists for Christ is a media based organization devoted to promoting Christian ethics in the media. It is also involved in engaging and identifying with programmes and ventures that can engender the growth and development of Christianity and the media at both local and international levels.
Nigerians Abroad Invite Applications for 2003/2004 Scholarship Awards

The Scholarship Committee of the Association of Nigerians Abroad (ANA), an Internet-based association of Nigerian professionals and friends of Nigeria, with membership drawn from all over the world, is now accepting applications for the 2003/2004 Academic Scholarship Award. The deadline for submissions is March 15, 2004.

The scholarship is open to all suitably qualified students in Nigerian Universities. Each scholarship is for a sum of N20,000, which is awarded on a one-time basis to each successful applicant, to supplement their educational expenses for the full academic year.

The ASC will use the following selection guidelines:

- A prospective nominee must be a duly registered student of a Nigerian University.
- A nominee should be among the top five in his or her class, in a given department, with a GPA of at least second class (upper division) status.
- Students with physical disability are highly encouraged to apply, as a special award category is available.
- A nominee must not be a cult member, and must be of good behavior.
- A nominee must show social consciousness (community service, etc), based on the University Administration’s evaluation and recommendation.

Application forms are obtainable from the offices of the Vice Chancellor and/or Registrar of each university or from ANA’s website at: http://www.ananet.org/. Each applicant should complete an application form. Every applicant is required to submit one copy of the following:

- A completed application form.
- Official transcript(s) of University grades sealed and issued by the Registrar.
- A letter of recommendation from a Faculty member or Advisor: Verifying the applicant’s academic performance; Degree programme for which registered and projected year of graduation; Suitability of candidate based on the selection guidelines.
- Two endorsed passport photographs.
- An email address - this will be used for all communication, especially notifying winners.

Any application without all the required documents will not be considered.

The ANA Scholarship Committee’s decision is final. Any discrepancy will lead to disqualification of an applicant. Completed application forms of nominated applicants should be mailed to the appropriate ASC University Liaison Officers listed below for the respective geographical region of Nigeria in which the university is located.

For Cross River, Akwa-Ibom, Abia, Edo, Delta, and Rivers States, completed application forms are to be mailed to Dr. Rosaline Okosun at 116 Ashbury Avenue, London, Ontario, N6E 1T1, Canada.

For Enugu, Anambra, Imo, and Ebonyi States, they should be mailed to Dr. Nubi Achebo at Saint Xavier University, 3700 W. 103rd Street, Chicago, IL 60655, USA.

For Lagos and Ogun States, they should be mailed to Dr. Robert Okojie at 11568 Webster Road, Strongsville, OH 44136, U.S.A.

For Osun, Ondo, and Oyo States, they should be mailed to Dr. Felix Akojie at 3014 Harrison Street, Paducah, KY 42002, USA.

For Sokoto, Kebbi, Niger, Katsina, and Kano States, completed application forms should be mailed to Prince Ralph Okojie at 5312 Old Railroad Way, Hope Mills, NC 28348, U.S.A.

For Kaduna, Bauchi, Jigawa, Borno, Yobe, and Taraba States, they should be mailed to Lee Kareem at 14932 Albion Road Strongsville, OH 44136, USA.

For Adamawa, Plateau, Benue, Kwara, and Kogi States as well as the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, they should be mailed to Fatai Oyejobi at P.O. Box 10799, 211 Redbird Lane, Beaumont, TX 77710, USA.
Application Sought for 2004 Commonwealth Broadcaster’s Bursary

The Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA), an organization of the major public service broadcasters in over 50 Commonwealth countries, is seeking applications for its Broadcaster’s Bursary, offered for study leading to a master’s of arts degree at the City University, London.

The graduate programme which begins in September 2004 and takes 12 months to complete is for the “International Journalism” course, which has a broadcasting component.

Applicants have to be from a Commonwealth developing country (excluding Australia, Brunei, Canada, Cyprus, Gibraltar, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Singapore, the U.K.), according to the CBA.

Eligible for the endowment are candidates who have graduated with a first degree, and can show evidence of English language ability with an IELTS of a 7 above. The applicants have to be working journalists under 33 years-old and staff employees of a CBA member organization.

Application details are obtainable from Elizabeth Smith at Elizabeth@cba.org.uk, at telephone +44 (0) 20 7583 5500, fax +44 (0) 20 7583 5549 or the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association Secretariat, 17 Fleet Street, London EC4Y 1AA, U.K. Forms are also available at http://www.cba.org.uk

The deadline for application is January 31, 2004.

“Freedom of Expression constitutes one of the essential foundations of a [democratic] society, one of the basic conditions for its progress and for the development of every man.”

European Court of Human Rights, Judgment
December 7, 1976,
Series A, No.24; 1 European Human Rights Record

Media Rights Monitor
Published by:

Media Rights Agenda
10, Agboola Aina Street
Off Amore Street
Off Toyin Street, Ikeja
P. O. Box 52113, Ikoyi
Lagos, Nigeria.
Tel: 234-1-4936033, 234-1-4936034, 234-1-4819162
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E-mail: pubs@mediarightsagenda.org
Web site: http://www.internews.org/mra