Global Conference Recommends Measure To Combat Corruption

The 11th International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC) held in Seoul, South Korea, last month with a set of concrete recommendations from the world-wide anti-corruption movement, including calls to clean up political party financing, deal with conflicts of interest, and institute restraints on “revolving doors” between business and government.

The conference highlighted the need to tackle endemic corruption in the health sector and pharmaceuticals industry and focused on an honest and competent judiciary as critical to the rule of law, without which “few benefit, and many suffer.”

Despite Nigeria’s plunging image globally as a result of widespread corruption in the public and private sectors, Dr. Dora Akunyili, the Director-General of the National Agency For Food and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) in Nigeria was one of the three persons awarded the Transparency International (TI) Integrity Awards 2003 during the ceremony.

The other recipients were Sua Rimoni Ah Chong, the former Auditor General of Samoa, and Anna Hazare, an Indian campaigner against corruption in forestry and in government.
Dr. Akunyili, 48, a pharmacologist by training, was given the award for her fight against corrupt practices in the manufacturing, import and export of drugs, cosmetics and food products despite threats to her life.

Transparency International said: “Since taking up her position in April 2001, Dr. Akunyili has earned nationwide respect for her persistence in prosecuting illegal drug traders and in imposing strict standards on multinational companies. In particular, she has pursued manufacturers and importers of counterfeit drugs, deemed to be a leading cause of deaths by stroke and heart failure in Nigeria. Counterfeits drugs worth an estimated US$16 million have been confiscated and destroyed by Dr. Akunyili and her staff, in the process saving the lives of thousands of innocent Nigerians.”

The proposed actions were aimed at heads of state and key government officials attending the Global Forum III, the governmental anticorruption conference which was also held in Seoul immediately after the IACC.

Over the last 20 years, the IACC has evolved into a leading international anti-corruption conference that gathers practitioners, experts, and activists on corruption to exchange knowledge and experiences about how best to contain corruption and minimize its consequences for poor people in developing countries. This year’s conference, held on May 25 to 28, was attended by over 900 leading representatives from the private and public sectors, international institutions and civil society.

An active participant in the IACC since 1997, this year marked the first time the World Bank was invited to be part of the Programme Committee which shaped the conference agenda. This was seen as a recognition of the Bank’s increasingly important role in helping to strengthen governance and reduce corruption in countries which seek its help. Over 40 percent of all IBRD/IDA operations now include public sector governance components.

Ms Helen Sutch, Sector Manager for the World Bank’s Public Sector Governance team and a member of the IACC Programme Committee, said: “Corruption remains one of the greatest obstacles to economic and social development. It undermines development by subverting the rule of law and distorting policy and budget choices, weakening institutions on which society depends, raising the costs of investment, lowering tax revenue while imposing a corruption premium’ on public expenditure, and in extreme cases destroying the credibility of the state and social order.”

Ms Sutch argued that: “Reducing corruption requires a coordinated global response, which is why the IACC is such a significant forum. It unites diverse stakeholders who share the common goal of eradicating corruption through meaningful political and economic reform.”

Anti-corruption and public sector governance experts from the Bank advised on the planning for four series of workshops: on public sector governance, corruption in the health sector, e-governance, and measuring corruption, and the relation of state and civil society. Bank experts also participated in workshops on the impact of corrupt networks and a conference session on ‘New Frontiers’ discussed the 2002 Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Survey (BEEPS), a survey of 6,000 firms in the Europe and Central Asia region conducted by the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

The BEEPS revealed that the “bribe tax” as a share of the firms’ revenue is decreasing and corruption is seen as less of a burden. Corruption nonetheless remains a major hurdle in many of the countries, particularly among the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The theme of the conference was “Different Cultures, Common Values,” reflecting, according to the IACC Council’s chairman, Justice Barry O’Keefe of Australia, the IACC’s objective “to nail the great lie that corruption is culturally determined.”

The Opening Plenary featured three prominent speakers who affirmed the central role of values and ethics in anticorruption. Hans Kung, a Professor of Theology in Germany, highlighted the common moral values of humanity and reciprocity that underpin diverse cultures.
and faiths, and that can provide the ethical base to combat corruption. Mr. Kuraiti Murungi, the Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs in Kenya, emphasized that the corrupt cannot be relied upon to eradicate corruption and decisive action rather than rhetoric is the pressing need of the hour. Sri Sri Ravishankar, the founder of the International Association for Human Values, stressed that corruption can be countered through five C’s: connectedness with society; courage to overcome insecurity and the incessant drive for material acquisition; cosmic awareness for a broader vision of life; care and compassion for the needy and for society; and commitment to contribute and serve.

These values were personified in the three Transparency International Integrity Award winners from Nigeria, Western Samoa and India who were recognized for courageously fighting against corruption and honoured in a moving opening ceremony at the IACC.

The conference traced this theme through workshops focusing on the lessons learned from recent corporate scandals like Enron and WorldCom, to corruption in the arms trade, and to the OECD Convention Against Bribery of Foreign Public Officials, which seeks to stem the bribery from companies in the developed world that undermines development in the poor world.

11TH INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION CONFERENCE
SEOUL, MAY 2003: THE SEOUL FINDINGS

We, some 900 people from 108 countries, drawn from governments, civil society and the private sector, assembled in our individual capacities in Seoul, capital city of the Republic of Korea, from 25 – 28 May 2003, for the 11th International Anti-Corruption Conference to address the theme “Different Cultures, Common Values”. Our earlier gatherings have taken place in all five continents. Our proceedings were chaired by the Hon. Justice Barry O’Keefe, Chair of the Council of the International Anti-Corruption Conference.

We were delighted to join in the recognition and applause for the three worthy recipients of Transparency International’s Integrity Awards. We also saluted the winner of the award for Latin American investigative journalists. Their personal efforts and commitment serve as an inspiration to us all.

We were honoured to have our proceedings opened by H.E. President Roh Moo-hyun, President of the Republic of Korea. He described the approaches his government has been adopting in carrying out its promises to his people of a participatory and corruption-free society following the cleanest and fairest election in the country’s history. “The financial crisis in 1997 caused Koreans to realise that transparency and fairness are as important as growth itself,” he reflected.

From the outset we addressed the theme of our conference, “Different Cultures, Common Values”. Our insights were enriched by profound addresses from the Hon. Ms Kang Kum-Sil (Minister of Justice, Korea), Professor Hans Kung (President of the Foundation for a Global Ethic), Sri Sri Ravi Shankar (Chairman of the International Association for Human Values) and the Hon. Kiraitu Murungi MP,(Minister of Justice, Kenya). H.R.H Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan, unable to attend, shared his thoughtful insights with us.

In opening our working sessions, the Hon. Ms Kang declared our goal to be the realisation of a “clean, accountable and fair society”. We dedicate ourselves to that end.

The Hon. Murungi argued cogently that large-scale corruption should be designated a crime against humanity, as for many around the world it falls into the same category as torture, genocide and other crimes against humanity that rob us of our human dignity. In supporting his call, we condemn corruption as immoral, unjust and repugnant to the ideals of humanity enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and we confirm our conviction that all human beings have a basic human right to live in a corruption-free society.
In a wide-ranging analysis, H.R.H. Prince El Hassan observed that the peace of nations partly arises and is sustained through the cumulative efforts of society, including the peaceful and just behaviour of at least an aggregate of individuals. It can first be realised, he said, when we have confidence in the inherent ability of humans “to see good, to do good and to be good.” We declare our own confidence in this belief.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, in a moving address, pointed out that corruption is at its lowest levels in the village, where people connect with each other, and at its highest where people lack self-esteem and confidence in their own ability to provide for themselves in an insecure world. He decried a world that was globalised in all respects, except that of wisdom.

Professor Kung’s detailed analysis of cross-cultural ethical values and standards covered the Koran, the Hebrew Bible, the Buddhist Canon, and the New Testament as well as the religions and philosophies of Indian and Chinese origins as well as humanist philosophies not rooted in any religion. His conclusions reaffirmed our own intuitive belief that “do not lie” and “do not steal” are common core values and standards, and that the principle of reciprocity – “Do not do to others what you would not wish to be done to you” - lies at the heart of all traditions.

We state our strong conviction that there is absolutely no substance in the myth that corruption is a matter of culture. Rather, it offends the beliefs and traditions of us all.

We met against the background of strenuous efforts being made to strengthen controls to counter money-laundering in order to counter the threat of terrorism present in many parts of the world, and in the immediate aftermath of a series of scandals in the private sector in the United States of America and across the globe. The scandals expose the bankruptcy of the new financial theory that the value of a corporation is what the market is willing to pay for it rather than that of its net assets.

As well, our world has been witnessing a failure of markets, a failure of institutions and a failure of moral norms. The tasks we face have become even more urgent and the more challenging, and the need for success even more compelling.

A crisis in ethics lies at the heart of recent failures in self-regulation, and underlines the necessity for appropriate government regulation, especially in areas vulnerable to corruption. There is a place for self-regulation, but the processes involved call for independent monitoring and verification.

We renew our commitment to a global international order that protects the weak and the vulnerable; that builds confidence among nations; that provides for sustainable development, particularly for the poor; and that serves as a dependable infrastructure for international commerce.

The view was expressed to us that the promises of the new globalised economic system will not be fulfilled, even if global companies and markets, national governments, national institutions and intermediate organisations work efficiently, for today it is the ethical framework on which they are based which is being increasingly questioned. This must be redressed.

Since we last met, work has begun on the drafting of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, a development we whole-heartedly support and which we look to as providing a framework for future international cooperation. If our efforts are to succeed, significant change has to be effected in countries in all parts of the globe, those of the rich no less than those of the poor.

We look to the new Convention, scheduled for completion and signature at the end of this year, to significantly enhance the levels of international legal assistance so as greatly to reduce the ability of the corrupt to hide themselves and their looted assets across international boundaries, and for the recovery and repatriation of assets to be addressed so as to ensure effective measures in this area.

We again stress the supreme importance of the prevention of corruption. Prosecutions are frequently the consequence of failures in prevention. It will greatly assist the reduction of levels
of corruption if the new Convention contains mandatory prevention measures. Monitoring and international assistance provisions in particular must be adequately funded so that countries in the developing world can also fulfill their obligations. There is clearly scope for the monitoring elements to take advantage of those of existing regional bodies.

Corruption in the private sector is of increasing importance to the public as essential utilities and services are privatised: it is important that private-to-private corruption be included in the final document. Likewise it is essential that the role of civil society in helping to combat corruption be recognised. We believe, too, that effective monitoring with civil society participation will be essential if the final Convention is to achieve its goals.

We recognise, too, the strain that can be placed on the limited resources of poor countries in their pursuit of cases with an international dimension. We applaud the courage and determination of the government of Lesotho in its principled pursuit of alleged bribe-givers, as graphically described by the Hon. Fine Maema, Attorney General of Lesotho, and detailed in the excellent case study before us.

We record, too, the tributes paid by the Attorney General to the Swiss authorities in assisting to trace the bribes paid to the Lesotho public servant involved.

However, it is clear that much greater levels of support must be available for countries such as this who are confronted by corruption allegations in major undertakings. We believe that the World Bank should consider developing a facility for the funding of forensic audits (which are by their nature neutral as between the parties involved).

We would also invite the World Bank to consider the possibility of its advancing moneys to victim governments when large sums of looted cash looted by their former officials are likely to be frozen for years in foreign bank accounts.

We also call upon the international community to examine the establishment of a trust fund to provide legal aid in appropriate cases such as those in Lesotho, and to create a network of legal and forensic accounting experts that can be made available to governments on a pro bono (i.e. free) basis.

We call as well on the international financial institutions to develop a common policy towards debarment of corrupt contractors and to recognise and enforce the penalties any of them impose. Likewise it is essential that funding agencies recognise and allow the debarment of contractors imposed by developing countries after due process.

We cannot leave the question of international cooperation without recalling the fact that in our closing statement at our last meeting, in Prague two years ago, we recorded a strong call for the immediate return of the disgraced former president, Alberto Fujimori from Japan to Peru, the country which he governed as Peruvian for ten years and to whose people he has yet to account for his stewardship. We heard a renewed call for cooperation, and were saddened to learn that no progress has been made in this regard.

We appreciate that a claim is made on his behalf for immunity from extradition by virtue of his claim to a second citizenship. This highlights a concern, expressed repeatedly throughout our proceedings, that immunities are afforded to far too many people and in a needlessly wide and general fashion.

These are widely exploited by corrupt politicians in particular, and foster a contempt for the Rule of Law by rendering thousands of people around the world beyond the reach of investigators and the courts. There are only very restricted areas in which immunity can be justified.

We believe that governments must review the scope of any immunities as a matter of urgency, and then take any action necessary to restrict these to legitimate and justifiable limits.

Our discussions were again wide-ranging. Containing corruption is a continuing process, and it involves institutions across government, the judiciary, the private sector and civil society. All are part of the problem, and all have an active part to play in achieving solutions. Without
the active support and involvement of civil society, a government is unlikely to succeed in its reform efforts.

Among the conclusions we reached in our workshops were the following:

**Politics**

- In our review of political party financing and electoral corruption it was apparent that political parties cannot be ignored in finance reform. Parties must themselves engage in internal reform efforts, practice transparency and demonstrate commitment to ethical standards. We recognised, too, that politicians face increasing difficulty in funding campaigns, and that reform efforts are unlikely to be successful until the costs of elections are reduced.

- To avoid state capture we need new preventative mechanisms, including stronger oversight and enforcement of broader and more extensive conflict-of-interest laws. Steps should be taken to ensure that there are appropriate time limits imposed before senior public officials can take up employment in the private sector in sensitive areas. Governments must be shielded from falling under corporate control. Appropriate provisions to regulate political party financing should be incorporated into both the UN and the OECD Conventions.

- Corruption operates through networks large and small. We recognise the value of “good networks”, as well as the existence of ambiguous and “bad” networks, and that the “bad” must be replaced by the “good”, not simply eradicated. Strong regulatory frameworks can assist in containing and disrupting “bad” networks, as can a functioning judicial system. However, the attitude of society as a whole to networks and to the role of law require examination in any given context to determine the informal rules that appear to guide mass and elite behaviour. Networks unquestionably often influence policy decision-making.

**International Systems**

- The future contribution the UN Convention Against Corruption will make to global anti-corruption efforts will be of critical significance. The recovery and repatriation of assets must be strengthened by this Convention and adequate resources made available to ensure that local judicial and law enforcement officials are trained so that mutual legal assistance is viable. The monitoring mechanism envisaged by the UN Convention could make use of, and draw on, existing models whereby regional bodies—such as GRECO—could be used to conduct monitoring on the UN’s behalf.

- We are concerned at a continuing widespread ignorance of the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions as shown by the recent Transparency International Bribe Payers’ Survey. We urge all governments to engage in effective awareness raising campaigns in their own countries to ensure that the private sector is aware of its responsibilities; to encourage their publics to report instances of violations; to compile public information on prosecutions; and to take steps to include civil society in the monitoring processes. We are concerned, too, to see that relevant governments ensure that the monitoring processes under the Convention are adequately resourced.

- We acknowledge the critical importance of peer-review mechanisms to bring about the reforms necessary to comply with international legal instruments and note with satisfaction the consolidation of these mechanisms in the OECD and in the Council of Europe (GRECO). We call for an intensification of their actions to ensure a more complete and effective implementation of standards in the anti-corruption area.

- In reviewing peer review under the OECD Convention (against the bribing of foreign public officials), we saw it as critical for civil society and the private sector to be involved at all stages of the peer review processes provided for under the Convention, and for peer review mechanisms to be designed with a clear focus on ensuring that the goals of the Convention are met. NGOs should monitor national implementation of the Convention and call their governments to account. An “international hotline” should be established by the OECD as an aid to enforcement. As a medium to long term objective, consideration should be given to the
establishment of an “international prosecutor” for major international corruption cases. There is a window of opportunity open to ensure that governments take the Convention seriously, but it will not last long.

* In considering regional cooperation in Asia and in Africa, we call upon all concerned to recognise the role that civil society can and should play in monitoring their countries’ adherence to the Conventions they sign, and we urge donor agencies to ensure that relevant civil society groups are funded sufficiently so as to enable them to discharge this essential task. Funds flowing into African governments through NEPAD should be conditional upon those governments ratifying the African Union Convention Against Corruption. We also encourage the international community to support efforts being made to strengthen arrangements for the repatriation of stolen assets and the proceeds of corruption.

* Arrangements for international mutual legal assistance in corruption investigations and prosecutions were reviewed. We examined case studies including tobacco smuggling based in Hong Kong, the case of ex-president Fujimori of Peru and of ex-president Abacha of Nigeria. The complexities of cases involving numerous countries are considerable. Legal assistance can be sought and refused, for reasons that are not always apparent or understandable. Yet mutual legal assistance is increasingly necessary in a globalised world. This can be facilitated through international conventions (and we look to the UN Convention Against Corruption to be concluded later this year to advance matters in this area in particular).

* We addressed the topic of combating the trafficking in human beings. Many people – but especially women and children - are put at risk when countries’ preventive measures are inadequate. Among our conclusions was the need for multi-disciplinary groups to be established as national levels so as to ensure coordinated action against corruption and such trafficking.

* To Be Continued Next Month

MRA Re-presents Freedom of Information Bill to National Assembly as FOI Coalition Continues Mobilization

Media Rights Agenda (MRA) is again presenting the Freedom of Information Bill to the new National Assembly following the failure of the previous Federal Legislature to pass it into law before it was dissolved early this month.

The Bill, which is expected to be published in the Federal Government’s Official Gazette soon, is starting its journey through the legislative process afresh as required by law although it had already gone through two readings in the House of Representative, its Information Committee consideration and a public hearing. But the Information Committee was unable to present the report of the public hearing to the entire House in order to secure the passage of the Bill before the National Assembly was dissolved by President Olusegun Obasanjo on June 5 in the exercise of his powers under the constitution.

The Bill seeks to provide a legally enforceable right of access to information held by government departments and agencies for citizens.

The New York based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has already urged the newly elected lawmakers to pass the Bill, which was stalled in the House of Representatives for nearly four years following its first presentation to the National Assembly in 1999.

CPJ’s acting Executive Director, Mr. Joel Simon, said in New York: “CPJ urges Nigeria to pass this bill quickly. By giving the public, including journalists, the right to access government information, the legislation will enhance the media’s ability to report the news freely.”

The Freedom of Information Coalition has also continued its efforts to mobilise stakeholders across the country in a renewed advocacy for the enactment of the Bill into law.
As part of the renewed efforts to mobilize Nigerians to push for the enactment of the Bill by the new National Assembly, the Akwa Ibom State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the Kaduna chapter of Women in Nigeria (WIN), organized separate stakeholders meetings on May 27 and 30 respectively. Both meetings had in attendance representatives of the academia, civil society groups, journalists’ unions as well the Nigerian police.

The meetings were organized in collaboration with the FOI Coalition with funding support from the International Human Rights Law Group under its Partnership for Advocacy and Civic Empowerment (PACE) consortium programme.

The objectives of the meetings were to sensitize participants on issues relating to the Freedom of Information Bill, brief them on the present status of the bill and seek their views on how to further the advocacy efforts.

At Uyo, the Akwa Ibom State capital, Mr. Dominic Okon, the State Chairman of the Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO), who chaired the meeting organized by the State NUJ Council and the FOI Coalition, noted that denial of access to information is a disservice to Nigerians, stressing that it was imperative to enlighten the citizenry about the provisions and benefits of the Bill.

In seeking to dispel any fear among government officials about the passage of the Bill, Mr. Sunday Antai, the Chairman of the NUJ, Akwa Ibom State Council, explained that the Bill would not provide journalists with guns to kill government functionaries. Rather, he said, the Bill would raise the level of the people’s participation in governance and build confidence in the functioning of government, since it would promote transparency in government.

In his presentation, Mr. Osaro Odemwingie, the Coordinator of the FOI Coalition, recounted the process leading to the drafting of the Bill and gave a background on the formation, history and activities of the Coalition as well as the advocacy effort that had gone on in the last four years towards securing its passage.

He said the Coalition presently has a membership of 74 civil society organisations and commended active member organisations such as the Akwa Ibom State Council of the NUJ, praising them for their consistency in the campaign for the enactment of the law and for being able to host the meeting successfully within a very short notice.

Dr. Des Wilson, an Associate Professor of Mass Communication at the University of Uyo and a member of Amnesty International, delivered the keynote paper at the meeting. In the paper titled “Freedom of Information: The People’s Right”, Dr. Wilson advised that efforts should be made by promoters of the Bill to avoid making enemies in the advocacy for its enactment.

He attributed the failure of members of the last National Assembly to pass the Bill to their ignorance on the benefits of the Bill and enumerated what he called the 15 cardinal reasons why Nigerians must support the push for the passage of the Bill.

These include the fact that: it is a human right; it guarantees the right of access to information; guarantees the right to know; it ensures the right to express oneself within the law; it promotes the right to receive information; it guarantees the right to publish; it protects whistle blowers; it protects democracy and its institutions; and it guarantees the right to education. Others are that: it would help in the fight against corruption; it will ensure transparency and accountability; it will ensure the emergence of honest and dedicated leadership; and it will ensure effective participation in governance.

The presentations prompted contributions from participants who later issued a nine-point communiqué. The communiqué emphasized that the freedom of Nigerians to public information is not protected as a fundamental right of the citizens and that there is a regime of secrecy in the dissemination and flow of information from the government to the masses.

Participants also noted that the campaign for the passage of a Freedom of Information law in Nigeria appears to have been limited to the media community and a few sectors with the
result that a majority of Nigerians are ignorant of the Bill. They further noted that there appears to be a deliberate reluctance and refusal on the part of the National Assembly to pass the Bill. Consequently, participants suggested that the campaign for the passage of the Bill should be made all inclusive by enlarging it beyond the media community; that all citizens, especially lawmakers, should be informed that the Bill is not intended to witch hunt any person or group of persons in the society, rather it is aimed at strengthening and sustaining Nigeria’s democracy, public accountability and transparency.

They called for a massive and aggressive awareness campaign to enlighten the populace about the Bill, adding that efforts should be made to get individual states to begin the process of passing Freedom of Information laws for their respective states.

Finally, they called on Nigerians to bring pressure to bear on their lawmakers to pass the Bill into law without further delay.

The meeting in Kaduna followed a similar pattern. At the meeting, the Coordinator of WIN Kaduna, Ms. Ngukwase Surma, said the purpose of the meeting was to inform participants about the status of the Bill which has been before the National Assembly and solicit their continued support for it. She said WIN Kaduna’s interest in the issue is based on its belief that access to information is central to good governance and thus is a great asset for women’s rights advocacy.

Mr. Odemwingie also provided a background to the campaign effort for the enactment of the Bill into law and the status of the Bill at the National Assembly.

While noting that the Bill was among the first to be presented to the House of Representatives soon after its inauguration in June 1999, having been presented in July 1999, he expressed disappointment that four years after its presentation, the House of Representatives failed to pass the Bill.

He said MRA and other stakeholder organizations undertook several advocacy activities aimed at getting the last National Assembly to pass the Bill and lamented the fact that despite holding a first and second reading as well a public hearing at which the Bill enjoyed a tremendous public support, the lower House still failed to pass it.

This failure of the last National Assembly to pass the Bill, according to Mr. Odemwingie, is the reason for the stepping-up of the advocacy campaigns. He also noted that the Freedom of Information Secretariat had resolved, in line with suggestions at previous stakeholders meetings, to begin seeking stakeholder groups in different states of the federation to collaborate with in an effort to expand the campaign for the enactment of the Bill in some states of the federation.

Mr. Odemwingie urged the meeting to find alternative ways in which the Bill could be pushed through in the new National Assembly and asked participants as experts in their various field to suggest better approaches that could be adopted by all to see that the Bill gets passed.

He stressed that secrecy in matters of public interest is a violation of the principle of the people’s rights to know and antithetical to the tenets of transparency and accountability in governance.

Mr. Odemwingie said a large percentage of Nigerians have a wrong impression of freedom of information regime as many think that it means freedom for the press and the press only. He said the public as well as the press have a duty to propagate democracy, but noted that if information that is vital for a democratic system to operate effectively is classified as “secret” and public office holders are barred by law and practices from giving information to those on behalf of whom they hold office, there will be no healthy democracy.

He argued that in a democracy there is the need for more freedom and not less. This, he said, is key to strengthening democratic institutions and values. Less freedom on the other hand, he said, means a drift towards authoritarianism. He explained that it was against this background
that MRA and other bodies decided to work towards the enthronement of a freedom of information regime in Nigeria.

A round of intervention, question and answers followed Mr. Odemwingie’s presentation. At the end of the interventions, participants made commitments to contribute their efforts to the process of securing the enactment of the Bill into law and agreed on a 10-point plan of action.

They agreed that there was need for a sustained campaign to push for the passage of the Bill and called for a more intense public education on the Bill showing how it will benefit Nigerians. They noted that journalists have a central role to play in the campaign and called on the NUJ to be more involved. They appealed to policy makers in the media to introduce programmes in their media outlets that would use local languages to explain the philosophy of the Bill.

Participants also suggested that stakeholders should adopt a more aggressive approach in the campaign since it appears that diplomacy had failed. Such an approach, they said, could be in the form of a protest march to the National Assembly by a select group of journalists, members of other professional groups and the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) as well as a Freedom of Information Coalition lobby group to the forum of Speakers of State Houses of Assembly to pass similar laws in their states.

They proposed a national conference on the B to be held with broad based participation.

The participants also noted that previous commitments and strategies reached at other meetings needed to be followed up and re-evaluated to find out what the failures have been and how best to move the process forward.

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WAN Appeals To African Union For Press Freedom

The World Association of Newspapers is supporting a petition to the African Union calling for the abolishment of media laws and practices which restrict press freedom and create a hostile environment for journalists.

The petition will be presented to President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, the Chair of the African Union, at a meeting of Heads of State in Maputo, from 5 to 12 July.

“The right for journalists to practice without fear of legal persecution and personal injury is fundamental to any functioning democracy,” said Timothy Balding, Director General of WAN. “Too many journalists in Africa are forced to operate in appalling conditions which not only infringe on their capacity to operate as media professionals, but also violate their basic human rights.”

The petition campaign was launched by two African human rights groups, the Centre for Research Education & Development Of Freedom of Expression and Associated Rights and FAHAMU, which comes from the Kiswahili word for “understanding”.

The petition asks for African leaders to release all incarcerated journalists and repeal anti-media and anti-freedom of expression legislation. National security laws, anti-terrorism legislation and criminal defamation laws have landed score of journalists in prison throughout Africa and resigned many more to practising self-censorship.

WAN is encouraging its members to sign the petition, which can be found at http://www.ipetitions.com/cam/campaigns/freeafricanmedia/

The Paris-based WAN, the global organisation for the newspaper industry, represents 18,000 newspapers; its membership includes 72 national newspaper associations, individual newspaper executives in 100 countries, 13 news agencies and nine regional and world-wide press groups.

NUJ Protests Non-Payment of ThisDay Staff Salaries

On May 12, the workers at the headquarters of ThisDay newspaper in Lagos, supported by the Lagos State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) picketed the premises
for three hours paralyzing activities at the media house. Mrs. Funke Fadugba, Chairman, NUJ Lagos State Council led her executive members to the premises of the Newspaper Company on 35, Creek Road, Apapa, Lagos in support of the protest.

The protest began at 4p.m with the workers and journalists singing a variety of solidarity songs in which they condemned the alleged inhuman treatment meted out to the workers of the newspaper organization.

Mrs Fadugba who addressed journalists at the first floor of ThisDay complex said the union had given the management enough warning to prevent “the strike action. And this is not really to embarrass the management. But we have, at the juncture, to make the statement clear that journalists would not tolerate non-payment of salaries any longer”.

She expressed disappointment over the management’s refusal to keep up its promises of paying their workers promptly and as at when due after several dialogues with them.

“I think they have taken us for a ride for long. And if we fail this time around, the chapel will lose its credibility and the struggle which has to be carried out at all media houses that have refused to pay their workers’ entitlement, will lose the steam,” Fadugba noted.

The NUJ national secretary, Shuaibu Usman Leman in his speech said that the protest was to teach the ThisDay management a lesson, as well as to serve as warning to other media houses on the consequences of unpaid accumulated salaries.”

Shuaibu disclosed that “journalists in ThisDay out stations within Nigeria were being owed up to 13 months while those in the Lagos head office were yet to receive accumulated salary of three months.”

He concluded that the action became essential because the “NUJ National Secretariat gave this directive following the continued failure of affected media owners to yield to several pleas by the union.

He also disclosed that at a meeting on March 31, 2003, the Newspapers Proprietor’s Association of Nigeria (NPAN) was mandated to come with urgent steps to address the issues and find a lasting solution to them. There also the NUJ gave the deadline to embark on strike over non-payment of salaries.

He added that the meeting also set up a monitoring committee comprising the NPAN general secretary; NUJ national scribe and the secretary of the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE) including chairman, NUJ Lagos State, to specifically ensure payment of salary arrears. But unfortunately, after the meeting the situation did not improve rather it deteriorated. In addition, he aid the monitoring committee set up to specifically ensure settlement of salary arrears was ineffective.

The NUJ had earlier threatened industrial action against all media houses that fail to pay staff salary arrears by May 15, 2003.

Shuaibu also recalled that sequel to the March 31, 2003 emergency meeting of the Nigeria Press Organisation (NPO) stakeholders held at Vanguard Media Limited, the earlier deadline of March given by the NUJ over non-payment of salaries was suspended.

The NUJ said in view of the several and persistent complaints from her members on Unpaid salaries and the attendant social dislocation, it totally condemned the deliberate policies of media owners to continue to sustain poverty in the media through non-payment of salaries. It warned that it should not be held responsible for any resultant industrial action(s) that would be adopted to correct the situation.

The union listed some of its grouses to include:

• check-off deductions not being remitted but rather such deductions are ploughed back into the system;
• the continued non-payment of salaries has subjected journalists to untold hardship and subsistence life;
the media owners’ policy has subjected journalists to limited aspirations in terms of human development; as much as we appreciate some of the problem of media owners in terms of cost of equipment, production materials, taxation, delayed payment on adverts, we cannot continue to watch our members work without pay.

Groups Launch Media Handbook on HIV/AIDS In Nigeria

Three organizations on May 27 launched the first ever Media Handbook on HIV/AIDS in Nigeria to enhance media coverage of HIV/AIDS related issues in Nigeria.

The product of a collaboration between three organizations: Journalists Against AIDS (JAAIDS) Nigeria, Development Communications Network, (DevComs) the United Nations Information Center, (UNIC) Nigeria, the publication took 18 months two meetings and three workshops to put together. It is meant to provide information on facts and figures on HIV/AIDS, Scientific understanding of the epidemic, Impact and spread in Nigeria, List of local contacts and spokespersons for HIV-related topics, Listing of key resources, terminologies etc, guidelines for ethical reporting and use of language, and ‘How-to’ examples: e.g. interpreting statistics, reporting claims of cures etc.

According to a print media monitoring report conduct by JAAIDS, media coverage of HIV/AIDS issues in Nigeria has witnessed a significant increase in recent times. It said the monitoring report noted that about 1,846 articles comprising news, feature stories, opinions and editorial comments were published between March 2002 and March 2003, while 375 news photographs and 71 cartoon strips on HIV/AIDS were published during the period of the research.

Notwithstanding this encouraging level of response, obvious gaps still exist. Omololu Falobi, Program Director, JAAIDS identified some of these gaps as “insufficient understanding of the science of HIV, poor knowledge of ethical implications of HIV/AIDS coverage, use of stigmatizing and disempowering language as well as insufficient knowledge of authoritative sources of information on AIDS.” Access to reliable and credible HIV/AIDS resources was one way of addressing these gaps – and the newly launched handbook seeks to provide exactly that.

The handbook aims to promote qualitative and objective reporting of HIV/AIDS in the Nigerian media by providing a reliable, credible and authoritative source of information on HIV/AIDS.

The 90-page publication is divided into eight sections. These include HIV/AIDS: The Facts, The Myths; Ethical issues in reporting HIV/AIDS; Practical Guide to Reporting HIV/AIDS, HIV/AIDS and Special Populations; General Resources; Frequently Asked Questions; Facts and Figures; and Glossary of HIV/AIDS Related Terms.

The media handbook had inputs from practising journalists, media trainers, communications experts, epidemiologists, human rights advocates and people living with HIV/AIDS. Funding support for the project came from a number of United Nations agencies including UNAIDS, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP. The end product is a publication described by the book’s reviewer, Mr. Kingsley Osadolor, deputy managing of The Guardian Newspapers, as “a compendium and indispensable guide on HIV/AIDS reporting, not just for the target readers but also for members of the public wishing to upgrade their knowledge on HIV/AIDS”.

For Professor Bolanle Awe, renowned professor of history, who chaired the launch, said the media handbook was an eye opener. “It never really occurred to me that some of the terminologies we used in discussing HIV/AIDS could be stigmatizing,” she said. Chief Segun Olusola, respected broadcaster and former Nigerian ambassador to Ethiopia, described the handbook as “a necessary guide for communicating information about HIV/AIDS”.


Guests particularly commended the spirit of collaboration displayed by the three organizations that co-produced the handbook, noting that it was a good example of the partnership that is needed to confront the epidemic. Mr. Finjap Njinga, director of UNIC described this as “a partnership fired by the need and commitment to create informed understanding of issues related to HIV/AIDS”.

The media handbook, said Njinga, is a modest contribution to the immense work facing the media in mobilizing informed public discussion about HIV/AIDS. “It is an endeavor to explore ways by which the challenge posed by HIV/AIDS can be effectively relayed to readers, listeners and viewers”, he said.

An online version of the handbook will be available on the website of Journalists Against AIDS (JAAIDS) Nigeria: www.nigeria-aids.org.

CLEEN Sues Customs, Claims N9 Million Damages

The Lagos based Centre for Law Enforcement Education (CLEEN) has instituted a suit against The Nigerian Customs Service Board claiming N9 Million for the seizure of 2000 copies of the book *Hope Betrayed?* imported into the country from Geneva by the organization in August last year.

In a motion ex-parte, filed at a Federal High Court in Lagos, CLEEN is claiming the sum as monetary value of the books and general damages for the unconstitutional acts of the Nigerian Customs Service Board.

In the suit, the organization is among other reliefs seeking a declaration that the seizure, confiscation and prevention from circulation of the books is in derogation of the rights to freedom of expression as guaranteed by section 39 (1) and (2) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and consequently unconstitutional, null and void.

The suit filed on behalf of the non-governmental organization by Mr. I. C Macaulay of Tayo Oyetibo Chambers is also seeking a declaration that the seizure and confiscation of the book is in violation of the rights of the organization guaranteed by section 44 (1) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and consequently unconstitutional, null and void.

The organization asked the court to order the Board of Customs and Excise to return the books within seven days of the order of court to the organization failing which the respondents shall pay to them N4 Million being the monetary value of the books.

In a seventeen-paragraph affidavit deposed in support of the suit, Mr. Innocent Chukwuma, Executive Director of CLEEN told the court that his organization had in collaboration with a Geneva based international organization, the World Organization Against Torture, (OMCT) of Geneva Switzerland published a book titled *Hope Betrayed*. The book according to him contains ideas, opinions and information about impunity and state sponsored violence in Nigeria adding that the book was launched in Lagos on August 26, 2002.

Mr.Chukwuma said that the successful launching of the book caused an increase in demand for more copies of the book necessitating the placement of an order for 2000 additional copies from the printers in Geneva.

The Deponent said the consignment, which arrived in Nigeria on or about September 2002, was seized at the Murtala Mohammed International airport without any reason. He said that concerted efforts by the organization and its clearing agent Panalpina World Transport (Nigeria) Ltd to secure the release of the books yielded no result.

The cover price of a copy of the book he said is N2,000 while the total value of the 2000 copies is N4 Million adding that the act of the seizure and confiscation of the consignment of books has caused his organization substantial loss of income and goodwill.
CLEEN had been informed by Panalpina through a letter dated October 11, 2002 that Customs officials seized copies of the book on the excuse that the book had political undertone and needed clearance from the Comptroller General in Abuja for the books to be released.

No date has been fixed for hearing.

**Governor Threatens To Sack ABC Workers**

Governor Haruna Boni of Adamawa State on May 27, during a visit to the Adamawa Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) threatened to sack the workers of the Corporation if they continue to run commentaries capable of inciting people against his administration.

Governor Haruna during a visit to the Corporation said it was unfortunate that it was broadcasting commentaries capable of breaching the relative peace that existed in the state rather than promote peace and development.

He warned that as the State Chief Executive, he had the power to dismiss any staff not loyal to him adding however that he was not suggesting that constructive criticism should not be entertained. He said he had a duty to maintain peace and stability in the State.

The station’s General Manager, Abba Tahir in his response promised to improve on the broadcast of news commentaries such that they would not cause confusion. He added that news commentaries were broadcast to educate not to create tension. He said that the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) had commended the station for adhering to its rules and regulations. He promised to ensure that only the director of news and senior reporters would henceforth be allowed to write news commentaries with a view to avoiding mistakes.

**NBC Closes Radio Station Over Election Result**

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) has ordered the closure of a private radio station, Jeremy FM (JFM) in Adeje village near Warri, Delta State, for contravening the NBC rules guiding broadcast of election results in the country.

The NBC hammer fell on the station for alleged broadcast of an unauthorised announcement, which declared Chief Great Ogboru, the Alliance for Democracy (AD) gubernatorial candidate, as the winner of the April 19, gubernatorial election in the state.

JFM declaration of Ogboru as winner of the April 19 gubernatorial election generated serious tension in the state because the Independent National Electoral Commission in Asaba, the state capital, was still collating the results and had not declared any candidate a winner.

Following this breach of broadcast regulation, the police immediately besieged the station and arrested the continuity announcer on duty, Mrs. Esther Ofuegbe, George Nutasai and four other staff of the station. They were arraigned at a Magistrate’s Court in Asaba, on Monday, April 28, alongside the Publicity Secretary of the state AD, Mr. Clever Egbeji, who allegedly took the copy of the result to the station for broadcast.

They face a three-count charge including publishing and announcing a false report likely to cause hatred or contempt or to excite disaffection against the persons and office of the Governor, Chief James Ibori. The announcement, the charge further stated was “likely to cause fear and alarm to the public or to disturb the public peace, knowing or having reasons to believe same to be false.”

The NBC had prior the 2003 general elections sternly warned against unfair use of the airwaves threatening severe sanctions, including license revocation. It drew their attention to the provisions of Section 5.4.0 of the National Broadcasting Code which regulates the coverage of electioneering campaigns.
Building A Commonwealth Of Freedom

The Joint Commonwealth Societies Council (JCSC) at the Roayl Commonwealth Society (RCS) in London, UK has announced the theme for both Commonwealth Day 2004 and this year’s Commonwealth Vision Awards as well as the annual short film competition. ‘Building a Commonwealth of Freedom’ will be the focus of Commonwealth Day celebrations on 8 March 2004 and also of the film entries from around the world.

The JCSC, which is made up of some 20 Commonwealth organisations, announced that the theme has been approved by Her Majesty the Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, following consultations with Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon.

“This theme embraces not only political values such as democracy, civil and political rights and the rule of law, but also economic and social rights. It encapsulates all freedoms – of belief, of choice, of expression, of association, as well as freedom from fear and freedom from want,” Mr. McKinnon.

The awards, jointly organised by the RCS and the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association, are open to all broadcasters and independent programmed makers within the Commonwealth. The winning entries are broadcast widely across the Commonwealth and receive prizes.

“I’m sure that these films will do more for the image of Commonwealth than a thousand well-meaning words – reminding us that the Commonwealth is not just an association of governments but also a partnership of peoples,” the Secretary-General said.

At the launch of the 2003 Commonwealth Vision Awards, BBC broadcaster and chair of the ARTICLE 19 international board Zeinab Badawi said: “This innovative award has already proved its worth since its inception two years ago. It encourages talent across the Commonwealth. Its themes provoke and stimulate creative work. And its film help convey the Commonwealth message in an exciting and imaginative way, especially to young people”.

Referring to the 2003 theme, Ms Badawi added: “Freedom is a compelling issue which presents a huge challenge to the whole world and of course the Commonwealth itself.”

Judging of the shortlisted films will take place in November with the results announced at a Gala Awards Ceremony at the Commonwealth Club, London, in December of this year. The winner will receive £2,500 and a trophy, and other awards will be made. The winning entries from January 2004, will be distributed for broadcast Commonwealth-wide, particularly on Commonwealth Day.

The awards are supported by the Commonwealth Secretariat, the UK Department for International Development, the Commonwealth Foundation, the British Council, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the BBC World Service.

The closing date for application is Friday, 15 August 2003; Samples of last year’s entries and more information are available at: www.rcsint.org/vision.jsp.

CREDO And Fahamu Petition AU On Journalists And Free Expression

CREDO for Freedom of Expression and Associated Rights and Fahamu have launched a petition calling on African Union Heads of State to release all incarcerated journalists and repeal all anti freedom of expression legislation. The petition is to be presented at the African Union meeting of Heads of State in Maputo in July and is addressed to President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa the current Chair of the AU.

The petition launched in the current edition of the Africa focused mass circulating electronic newsletter “Pambazuka” states “We are writing to express our concern over the continued incarceration of and harassment of journalists in the majority of African countries for
no other reason than carrying out their legitimate duties. We are also very concerned about the persistent violation of freedom of expression in Africa, which denies Africans the opportunity to participate in democratic debate towards solving the many problems facing the continent.”

The petition amongst other points, also emphasises that:

“Active participation of citizens in shaping policy and decision making of their countries is impossible if their own governments continue to deny them the rights necessary to ensure such participation. These include the rights to freedom of expression, assembly, association and political participation, as well as media freedom to facilitate a free exchange of information, ideas and opinion.”

“It was with great hope and expectation that all Africans and friends of Africa welcomed the launch of the African Union and looked forward to a new future based on its constitutive Acts. However two years into this bold experiment, no significant progress has been made. Even worse, two of the first five countries to sign up i.e. Eritrea and Zimbabwe have been turned into living hells for the media by the governments of those countries.”

The petition ends by calling on the “concerned African leaders to without delay release all incarcerated journalists, re-open all closed media houses, repeal anti-media legislation and recognise the importance of a free press, freedom of expression and other associated rights as vital ingredients necessary to build free, democratic and prosperous societies. Only when this is done will the NEPAD initiative and any future similar initiatives have any real meaning for the peoples of Africa.”

Both organisations called on “Africans and friends of Africa especially journalists and campaigners” to ensure they sign the online petition in order to make a strong statement to the African Union meeting in July.

Rotimi Sankore Coordinator of CREDO further stated “Representative Heads of State of the African Union attended the G8 summit to seek more support for Africa when they themselves are not doing enough to help the continent. NEPAD was designed without appropriate input from or consultation with African civil society. It therefore sounds hollow to many Africans when NEPAD is trumpeted as the ultimate solution to Africa’s problems while there is so much repression and lack of free speech on the continent.”

“There must be no double standards on fundamental rights and freedoms for Africans by either the G8 or African Union Heads of State.”

NGOS LAUNCH MEDIA, PEACE-BUILDING HANDBOOK

The European Centre for Conflict Prevention in cooperation with the European Centre for Common Ground and the Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society (IMPACS) have launched a new how-to guide for implementing effective and sustainable media development projects in conflict zones for media trainers and free-expression groups. The book titled The Power of the Media: A Handbook for peacebuilders illustrates best practices and lessons learned in media projects such as radio and television programming, training and transitional journalism development and intended outcome programming.

It includes profiles of 69 organisations working in this field worldwide as well as a selection of key literature and reports, websites and audio-visual productions. The handbook builds on an existing body of research and experience regarding the media’s role in peace building.

The 246-page book is available for US$17 plus shipping costs from: European Centre for Conflict Prevention, Korte Elisabethstraat 6, PO Box 14069, 3508 SC Utrecht, The Netherlands; Tel: +31 30 242 7777; Fax: +31 30 236 9268; info@conflict-prevention.net; www.conflict-prevention.net
AMARC Seeks New Secretary General

The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) is an international non-governmental organization (NGO) that facilitates cooperation, exchange and communication between community radio stations around the world with the perspective to democratize communication. AMARC has existed as a global movement for 20 years, and as an international NGO for 15 years. AMARC is currently recruiting for the position of Secretary General.

JOB OUTLINE

The Secretary General is responsible for the coordination of all organizational activities at the international level. The mandate of the Secretary General is to administer AMARC affairs and activities as defined by the International Board of Directors and in line with the policies and direction given by the General Assembly. The person hired should be highly experienced in the international non-governmental sector and have the necessary skills and dynamic nature to face numerous challenges presented by AMARC. He or she will have recognized skills in project conception and in organizational management in the field of international cooperation.

Requirements

♦ University degree in communication, social science or related discipline
♦ Experience in community media and/or participatory communications
♦ Experience working in international non-governmental organisations
♦ Strong management, planning, organisational and leadership skills
♦ Proven ability to manage and administer programs and functions of a complex organisation including supervising staff, managing project resources, fundraising and donor reporting
♦ Ability to facilitate strong working relationships between colleagues, donors, grantees, government officials and community members
♦ Ability to manage simultaneous priorities under tight deadlines
♦ Ability to work well in a multi-cultural and multi-lingual environment
♦ Good understanding of communications and global socio-political dynamics
♦ Willingness to engage in international travel
♦ Excellent verbal, written and interpersonal communication skills including report writing
♦ Working knowledge of French, English and Spanish and fluency in at least two of these
♦ Excellent word-processing and spreadsheet skills

Working conditions:

♦ Five year contract in Montreal, Canada
♦ Expected start date 1 September 2003
♦ Probationary period of six-months
♦ Salary range: $60,000-$70,000Cnd$ ($42,500-50,000US$)

Further information, a full job description including detailed terms and conditions is available on-line at www.amarc.org/jobs or on request from AMARC International Secretariat.

To Apply:

Send your CV to the AMARC International Secretariat in Montreal, with three professional reference letters and a five-page text, double-spaced in English, French or Spanish responding to the following two questions:

1. What are the major lessons that you have learnt from your work experience in the fields of communication and development?
2. What are the major challenges that an organization such as AMARC must face in pursuit of the democratization of communication?
ITU Announces 2003 Youth Forum

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) announces the Youth Forum component of its Telecom World 2003 event that will bring young university students together to establish common goals and experience the benefits of digital opportunities.

Participants in the Youth Forum will visit the ITU TELECOM WORLD 2003 Exhibition in Geneva on October 12-18, 2003, and will attend four sessions specifically on the Youth Forum that will feature political leaders addressing the technical, regulatory and financial issues, as well as other concerns relevant to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as a tool for social and economic development.

Please visit the ITU web site for more information on the Youth Program Forum, the Fellowship Program, the selection procedure, and sponsorship options. Go to: www.itu.int/WORLD2003/forum/youth/index.html

IPI Expresses Concern Over Proposal To Suspend RSF’s Consultative Status with the UN

The International Press Institute (IPI), the global network of editors, media executives and leading journalists in over 115 countries, which holds consultative status with the United Nations (UN) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has petitioned Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) and Ambassador Gert Rosenthal, President of the UN General Assembly’s ECOSOC to express serious concern at the proposal to suspend Reporters Sans Frontières’ (RSF) consultative status with the UN.

IPI in the petition signed by its Director, Johann P. Fritz said the call to suspend RSF represents a serious blow to the credibility of the NGO Committee and, indeed, the UN itself. It argued that “RSF should at least be given an opportunity to be heard,” adding that since its establishment in 1966 the NGO Committee has never suspended a member or observer without first hearing its representatives. It also noted that every one of the countries that voted in favour of RSF’s suspension, namely China, Côte d’Ivoire, Cuba, Iran, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Sudan, Turkey and Zimbabwe all abuse the most basic human rights. It maintained that Cuba, which proposed the suspension, failed to ratify the principal international human rights agreements.

On 17 March, six RSF activists threw leaflets into the Geneva meeting room during the inaugural speech of the Commission’s new Libyan president, Najat Al-Hajjaji. The leaflet mocked the appointment of a country such as Libya, known for its governments human rights violations, to chair a body dedicated to the protection of human rights. Referring to Najat Al-Hajjaji, the leaflet stated that the UN had at last “appointed someone who knows what she is talking about”.

According to reports, on 20 May 2003, the UN Committee on Non-Governmental Organisations called for the suspension of RSF’s consultative status with the UN for one year. This recommendation was made after Cuba complained that RSF had physically disrupted the opening of the 59th session of the Human Rights Commission in Geneva on 17 March, behaved in an insulting manner towards a member state and acted in a manner deemed “incompatible with the principles and aims of the UN Charter.”
In order to take effect, the suspension must be endorsed by the UN General Assembly’s Economics and Social Council (ECOSOC), which is expected to consider the proposal in July.

IPI also observed that with regard to the activities of RSF, leaflets are a legitimate form of expression of one’s opinion and any punishment for this action goes against Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It therefore called on the two principal UN officials to do everything in their power to stop the proposed suspension of RSF’s consultative status with the UN. IPI called on them to remember that work of NGOs such as RSF and their contribution to intergovernmental organisations are vital to the work of the UN and to the defence of human rights around the world.

African Journalists Launch Professional Association

Investigative reporters from several African countries launched the new Investigative Reporters Africa (IRA) network during a brainstorming session in Johannesburg according to the Media Institute of Southern Africa. The IRA would function as an independent professional association of working journalists committed to improving pan-African reporting standards and access to information.

“IRA’s founding members have committed the organisation to promoting effective, ethical and original investigative reporting that moves beyond mere muck raking in favour of more systematic and issue-based reporting in its proper context,” the organisation said in a statement.

“The organisation will also attempt to bridge Africa’s national borders by linking journalists across the continent and encouraging cooperation on multi-national investigations.”

IRA intends to achieve these goals by facilitating an exchange of ideas and resources, channeling support and technical advice, and creating an online platform for linking journalists within Africa and elsewhere in the world.

The network would also develop mechanisms for facilitating access to existing databases and information resources.

The IRA would develop appropriate ethical codes, accuracy checklists, tip sheets, and other guidelines for improving the standards and scope of investigative journalism as a profession in Africa. The IRA had secured initial seed funding from the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa (NIZA) to create the necessary structures and appoint a coordinator for one year.

A steering committee, initially consisting of journalists from Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, were tasked with drafting founding and policy guidelines and detailed funding proposals for core activities. Membership was, at the moment, by invitation only, and subject to rigorous peer review. Membership would thereafter be broadened, but would remain subject to nomination and peer review.

Act Summit 2003 To Be Held In Abuja In August

AITEC, Africa’s leading organizer of ICT conference and exhibitions, will be holding its fifth annual Africa Computing & Telecommunications Summit, ACT 2003, in Abuja over 26-29 August 2003. ACT is established as the continent’s top gathering of ICT users, suppliers, service providers, policy-maker and innovators. The theme of this year’s summit is: Mobilising ICT applications and projects for effective corporate, national and regional development.

AITEC’s Group Chairman, Sean Moroney, said that no other event draws together such a distinguished and widespread range of decision-makers from all four corners of the continent. AITEC expects over 500 participants. “We are delighted that the Nigerian government has
invited AITEC to hold ACT 2003 in Abuja, the Federal Capital of the Africa’s largest and fastest growing ICT market,” he said.

ACT will include a number of specialist forums and a major highlight will be the West African Internet Forum (WAIF), which AITEC will be holding in collaboration with the Nigerian Internet Group (NIG), the ISP Association of Nigeria (ISPAN), Balancing Act of the UK and the African ISP Association (AfriISPA). “Following the East African Internet Forum in Nairobi at last year’s ACT and the Southern African Internet Forum which AITEC held in April, it is time for West Africa’s ISPs, regulators and policy-makers to get together in one Forum to accelerate Internet development in West Africa through National and regional co-operation and increased technical knowledge. ACT will provide the platform to catalyse this process,” said Moroney.

Another key form at the event will be the African Open Source Forum, which AITEC is holding in association with the Free and Open Source Foundation for Africa (FOSFFA), which was formed earlier this year. “There is an intense debate currently raging across Africa regarding the pros and cons of open source software as a means of reducing computing costs. The Forum will provide a valuable opportunity for delegates to assess the arguments on each side and enable them to develop their computing strategies on a well-informed basis,” said Toyin Ogunseinde, GM of AITEC Nigeria an acknowledged computer industry leader in Nigeria.

ACT will also include the African Telecommunication Operators Forum, to provide an opportunity for the growing number of operators across West Africa and the rest of the continent to participate in an intensive information and education programme to improve their services and profitability in an increasingly competitive environment.

ACT’s SME Corporate Solutions Forum will be aimed at the enterprise management needs of small and medium-sized organizations across Africa. In addition, AITEC is going to work closely with stake-holders in Nigeria and across Africa to develop and e-Governance Forum at ACT 2003, aimed at briefing legislators and administrators on best ICT practices in government.

Intensive training workshops will cover a range of specialist topics, including: VSAT technical implementation; VSAT business management and marketing; Value added services for telecommunication operators, including SMS business opportunities; Technical skills for ISPs; and New wireless frontiers, including WiFi.

Keynote speakers will include Andile Ngcaba, Director-General of Communications in South Africa and Mark Davies, founder of the highly successful Busy Internet cyber centre operation in Ghana. Over 90 international and local experts will be speakers or workshop leaders. For further details, visit: http://www.aitecafrica.com

Panos and the SLAJ Hold Seminar to Develop Radio Policy Framework

The Panos Institute West Africa and the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists organised a two-day seminar in Freetown (14th and 15th May 2003) for the development of a comprehensive radio policy framework in Sierra Leone.

The radio, being the cheapest, most widespread and most accessible means of communication in urban and rural areas, will be extremely important in the near post-conflict future of Sierra Leone. In partnership with the Independent Media Commission and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of Sierra Leone, all the media stakeholders in Sierra Leone were asked to shed light on recommendations for action. The following issues were debated:

1. Towards the development of a radio policy framework. What mandate for public service broadcasting and private commercial and not-for-profit radio?
2. Towards a media law reform: what constitutional legislative framework would be appropriate?
3. How to strengthen the financial viability of the radio sector? What collective solutions to be put in place to sustain radio pluralism?
4. Enhancing radio pluralism. What are the various training needs?

Twenty-five (25) participants from all the representative media organisations reflected on those issues, developing a set of adequate recommendations that will be presented at the National Media Communication Policy, scheduled for July 2003.

PANOS, AMARC and SLAJ are currently implementing a support strategy CATIA, to create a positive policy environment for broadcasting in Sierra Leone. This pan-African radio strategy project supports democratic, pluralistic and pro-poor broadcasting environments in Africa. It is developed with support from the DFID

CTO Holds African Telecommunications Workshop

Telecommunications Competition and Privatisation was the focus of a multilateral event held by the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO) in Nairobi, Kenya, from 5 to 9 May 2003. The workshop, for the Africa region, was hosted by the Communications Commission of Kenya on behalf of the CTO and resourced through TM Training Solutions Ltd, and attracted 26 delegates from 16 countries in Africa.

Participants included senior managers involved with either the privatisation of their companies or choosing a strategic partner to work with in the future, and new players in the competitive marketplace such as Safaricom, in Kenya.

“Our workshop drew on the experience gained by TM Training Solutions Ltd and its associates to develop and implement strategic plans to rise to many of the challenges faced by participating telecommunications companies (telcos),” explained Dr David Souter, CTO’s Executive Director. “For example, delegates learned about the legislative and regulatory issues involved in taking a telco from a government-owned monopoly to a fully privatised company operating in a liberalised market.”

One of the most popular topics of the workshop was on the Universal Service Obligation, which provides benchmarks for the provision of basic services to deprived and rural communities. This states a minimum standard for access - such as a telephone within two hours’ walk — and goes some way to addressing the problems of agricultural and rural communities in Africa.

The CTO is a partnership between Commonwealth governments, regulatory authorities and telecommunications businesses to promote information and communications technology in the interests of consumers, businesses and social and economic development. It holds between eight and ten international conferences and workshops each year in the Caribbean, Africa and Asia/Pacific focusing on the operational, technical, commercial and financial aspects of telecommunications as well as regulation.

IFLA Mobilises Librarians For Information Society Summit

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) are holding a conference from 3 to 4 November in Geneva, Switzerland, to generate input from librarians ahead of the World Summit on the Information Society. IFLA invites librarians to share their views on the importance of free access to information and public archives and to help strengthen the perception of libraries at the summit.
Librarians around the world are encouraged to send IFLA examples of how their libraries successfully use Internet communications technologies in their work. IFLA plans to produce a brochure for distribution at the summit. For more information, see: http://www.ifla.org/III/wsis_appeal.html Read IFLA’s Internet Manifesto: http://www.ifla.org/III/misc/internetmanif.htm

Website offers human rights toolkit for activists
Are you wondering what you need to become a more effective human rights organisation? Are you looking for ways of improving lobbying work or access to the media? The Human Rights Connection (www.hrconnection.org) may be your answer.

Launched by the Columbia University Center for the Study of Human Rights, the Digital Freedom Network and Forefront, the Internet-based resource centre offers free training materials and resources catering to human rights activists. Materials include guides to using the media effectively, developing e-mail and website skills and organising strategic advocacy campaigns. Information is currently available in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish.

The website enables users to share information with each other by posting information, articles and case studies on success stories. As the site develops, more materials and topics will be added, including fundraising, financial management and how to manage a Board of Directors.
Visit: www.hrconnection.org

WAN launches website for African media network
An important source of information on press freedom and media development in Africa is now online, thanks to the World Association of Newspapers (WAN). RAP 21 (African Press Network for the 21st Century), a network of more than 450 members in over 40 African countries, has recently launched a new website, containing up-to-date tips on media management, press-freedom news and awards opportunities in English and French.

The website serves as an important source for networking and sharing information on independent newspaper management and on press freedom. It includes an archive of protest letters written by WAN dating back to 1997. A weekly newsletter provides summaries and links to content on the website and is available by email. Write to: rap21@wan.asso.fr


CREDO Writes AU Chair, Demands for Conducive Media Milieu in Member Countries
The CREDO for Freedom of Expression and Associated Rights (CREDO) has written the Chair of the African Union (AU) and President of Republic of South Africa Thabo Mbeki to voice its concern over the poor rights record of a significant number of AU member countries and its implications for their citizens.

CREDO wrote the letter on the occasion of the second anniversary of the formal establishment of the African Union (May 26 2001) which happens to coincide with the 40th anniversary of the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OUA) and ironically 25th of May, the Africa Liberation Day (as recognised by the UN General Assembly). It urged Mbeki to utilise the occasion to call on fellow African leaders to release all incarcerated journalists, repeal
all anti media and anti free-expression laws and legislation in their countries and end the persecution of journalists, civil society and peaceful democratic opposition.

The letter dated May 22 and signed by Coordinator Rotimi Sankore added that “these combined anniversaries again highlight the challenge of Africa’s post-liberation epoch as emphasised by the anniversary theme of ‘Peace, Prosperity and Development’.”

CREDO urged Mbeki to uphold the key tenets of the AU constitutive Act which obliges the union and member states among others to “promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance; protect human and peoples’ rights in accordance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and other relevant human rights instruments.

The NGO said its focus on this occasion which it consider the most desperate and believes the AU must act on urgently if it is to sustain the promise that heralded its inauguration was the areas of press freedom and freedom of expression especially in relation to famine and the rights to association, assembly and political participation. It also advocated the urgent need to resolve the serious conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The letter called attention to the respect of press freedom and freedom of expression situations in Zimbabwe and Eritrea which it said typify the tragedies to which it called attention regarding how the denial of these rights may result in the death of millions of people.

CREDO reminded the AU of the World Food Programme has for some months been calling world attention to existing and looming food shortages in several East and Southern African countries. The governments of these countries have by no coincidence been identified by several international and African press freedom and freedom of expression organisations as suppressing press freedom and freedom of expression, it added.

Eritrea, where the entire independent or private media have been shut down and at least 18 editors and journalists have been illegally imprisoned and others have fled the country or remain in hiding was identified as one of the worst countries that suppress press freedom and which the Paris-based press freedom group Reporters Without Borders in its 2003 Annual Report identified “the worlds biggest prison for journalists”.

It also fingered Zimbabwe where, though the entire independent or private media been shut down, not for lack of trying by the government but has over the last year detained or harassed at least thirty-two Zimbabwean journalists and numerous correspondents for non-Zimbabwean based media forced out of the country or deported. It also pointed out that government’s new requirements that criminalise journalists not accredited by the government and restrict non-Zimbabwean journalists to thirty day visa’s are just two of the mechanisms used to place pressure on the media to ‘shut up or shut down’.

CREDO said as it pointed out on World Press Freedom Day, May 3 “the lack of media freedom and freedom of expression means that the media is not able to freely reflect and analyse the big picture in these countries thereby depriving society as a collective of any early warning system usually provided by free and efficient exchange of news and information, or media platforms for debate and alternate opinions.”

CREDO said an end to the suppression of press freedom, freedom of expression and the rights to assembly, association and political participation will be a first and crucial step to preventing rights abuse, the perpetual cycle of famine on the continent and the possible death of millions.

Specifically CREDO urged Mbeki to use his good office to also ensure the un-banning of the private media in Eritrea and end the suppression of the media and free-expression in Zimbabwe.

The organisation urged the South African leader to act speedily and decisively on the issues it raised and ensure that they are firmly on the agenda of the 2nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union planned for Maputo, Mozambique in July adding that in this
regard, it will be a further step in the right direction, for the AU to ensure that a strong human rights mandate and adequate resources are provided for AU’s 10 incoming Commissioners. A copy was sent to Amara Essy Chairman ad Interim of the Commission of the AU.

UN-ESC Approves 89 NGOs For Consultative Status.

The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations has approved the applications of 89 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for consultative status with the Council. The approval was one of three decisions the Council took, acting on the recommendation of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organisations, as contained in its report E/2003/11.

In another action, the Council endorsed the request of Benin, Burundi, Congo, Ghana, Libya, Mozambique and Uganda for membership in the Committee on Negotiations with Intergovernmental Organisations.

In its resolution 2002/24, the Council authorized its President to appoint from among its member States the member of that Committee, tasked with negotiating an agreement between the United Nations and the World Tourism Organization.

NGOs may be granted either general, special or roster consultative status. General status is intended for organizations concerned mostly with the activities of the Council and, once accorded such status, they can propose items for the agenda, attend and speak at meetings and circulate statements.

Organisations concerned with only a few of the areas addressed by the Council may be considered for special status, which will allow them to attend meetings and circulate statements.

Rosters status is accorded to NGOs that can make occasional and useful contributions to the Council and they can attend meetings and are available for consultations at the Council’s request.

New Manual On ‘Writing For Television’ Launched For African Broadcasters

A practical manual aimed at helping aspiring African broadcast journalists improve their writing and production skills for television has been launched in South Africa.

Written by veteran reporter, Gerald Kelsey, the manual, “Writing for Television”, is published by A&C Black Paperback in South Africa and features 234 pages of practical pointers, exercises, and more advanced explorations of basic television reporting.

Special emphasis is placed on technique for producing successful television news scripts, and for managing the transition from writing for print media to television. The guide also introduces readers to key television production methods and the particular requirements of script layout.

Sample scripts from well-known television programmes are included as examples. Plots, story construction, characterization, and dialogue are also covered, while a section on marketing covers changes in the world of television.

An additional section is written to help beginners avoid common pitfalls. The manual can be obtained by ordering copies from Writers World, P. O. Box 1588, Somerset West, 7129, South Africa or by e-mail at writing@iafrica.com.

Human Rights Defenders Suffer Under Fight Against Terrorism

Human rights defenders around the world are in greater danger as governments use the fight against terrorism to clamp down on dissidents, according to a new report released by the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders.
The report entitled, “The ‘New Criminals’: Human Rights Defenders on the Front Line”, examines the situation of human rights defenders—journalists, trade union leaders, lawyers and families of disappeared individuals among others—worldwide during 2002. It provides detail of 399 cases where human rights defenders were killed, threatened, physically attacked, jailed or arrested.

The report said 76 defenders were killed or abducted last year.

The Observatory argued that although the fight against terrorism was legitimate and necessary, it was increasingly being diverted from its primary objective and used by governments to establish or strengthen their hold on power at the expense of commitments to human rights.

ATTACKS ON THE PRESS IN MAY 2003

Journalists Restrained from Panel Sitting

Journalists who went to cover the sitting of the Industrial Arbitration Panel on the dispute between the Federal Government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) were on May 28 prevented from entering the venue to cover and report the proceeding.

Mrs. Belinda Bobby-Diei, the chairman of the panel ordered all journalists at the venue of the sitting to leave immediately she took her sit. Despite protest by the counsel to ASUU, Mr. Femi Falana who demanded explanation saying that the event was a public sitting, Mrs. Bobby-Diei insisted journalists must leave and refused to commence the business of the day until they had left.

Suspected Thugs Attack Journalists

Suspected thugs of a chieftain of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) on May 19 assaulted journalists at the Oyo State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists confiscating and destroying some of their working equipment.

The thugs had invaded the council to disrupt a press conference to be addressed by the Minister of State for Communications, Alhaji Haruna Elewi.

Journalists who were covering the scene were assaulted and ThisDay photojournalist for Ibadan regional office, Mr. Felix Ademola and Mrs. Alaba Igbaraola who attempted to take photographs of the scene had their cameras seized.

After series of protests from the NUJ, the seized cameras were returned with the films destroyed.

Photo-Journalist Arrested

A photojournalist with The Punch newspaper, Mr. Ademola Oni was on May 3, in Lagos arrested for daring to take photographic shots of stranded passengers and impounded vehicles during the conduct of the state assemblies’ election.

Ademola’s arrest was ordered by an Area Commander of the Nigerian Police, Mr. S. F. Williams for also taking snap shots of him without allowing him to be properly dressed and not taking due permission before performing his duty.

Mr. Williams was addressing drivers and passengers of the impounded vehicle at the Berger Bus Stop in Ojodu, a suburb of Lagos when he saw Ademola taking photographs and got angry.
He confronted the journalist firing him a barrage of questions: “Who are you? Where are you from? Even if you are from The Punch is that why you should take my photograph without my cap on?

He thereafter threatened: “I’m going to remove that your film,” and he ordered that Mr. Oni be taken into a vehicle, adding as he did so, “by the time I finish with you, you will know.”

Mr. Oni was driven to Alausa where he was later released after the Mr. Williams saw his identity card saying: “You are lucky today that you are a Yoruba man. The lesson I would have taught you today, you wouldn’t have forgotten forever.”

Global Press Freedom Outlook Bleak, Says WAN

If the past six months are any indication, the outlook for press freedom around the world in 2003 is bleak, says the World Association of Newspapers (WAN).

At its annual world congress in Dublin, WAN released its half-year review of press-freedom worldwide saying an alarming number of journalists were killed and repression had increased in a number of countries.

“It was a deadly start of the year for journalists covering conflict, with the war in Iraq killing at least 13 journalists. Five journalists have been murdered in Colombia since January in the civil conflict that has killed over 30 journalists in the last decade,” WAN said.

Since November 2002, another 13 journalists have been killed around the world, including in India, Ivory Coast, the Philippines and the Palestinian Authority Territories, bringing the total during the period to 31.

WAN highlighted the situation in Cuba, where 28 journalists were sentenced in April to prison terms of between 14 and 27 years. The journalists were accused by the state of “working with a foreign power to undermine the government.” In Asia, imprisonment remains the biggest threat to free media in many parts of the region, with China topping the list with at least 40 journalists known to be in jail. Meanwhile, in the Middle East and in North Africa, criminal defamation laws appear to be the weapon of choice against the media in Morocco, Jordan, Tunisia and Egypt.

MEDIA / PRESS FREEDOM AWARDS

Prize for ICT For Development Work That Benefits The Poor

Nominations are invited for the Petersberg Prize. The Prize recognizes exemplary contributions in the filed of information and communication technologies (ICT) for development. The Prize will be awarded during the Development Gateway Forum, which will take place in 2004. Nominations are due by January 1, 2004. The Prize winner will receive an award of EUR100,000, without stipulations of how to use the funds. However, the winner(s) will be encouraged to sue at least EUR50,000.

In further promoting the activity identified in the nomination, or in mentoring prospective leaders in the ICT for development field, or in helping to disseminate the lessons learned in implementing the activity in question. He/She will be expected to participate in the 2005 Development Gateway Forum to report on how the resources were used.

The Prize will be award for a significant contributions to an ICT for development success that benefits a large number of people. The degree of the success, the magnitude of the benefits, and the importance of the contribution to that success will all be taken into account.

Benefit to the poor will be given priority. The winner of the Prize, through his/her contributions, should set an example that will inspire others to excel.
African Media Awards For Information Society Reporting

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and its partners on Monday May 14 presented the African Information Society Initiative (AISI) Media Awards to prominent media practitioners and organizations that have made significant contributions to the development of information and communications technologies (ICTs) and the information society in Africa.

An initiative of ECA, the awards are currently supported by the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA), the Open Society Initiative for Western African (OSIWA), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD).

This year’s winner and their special interest categories are: AISI-OSISA Print won by ICT Focus (Ethiopia); AISI-OSISA Radio won by Radio Afrique Espoir (Benin); AISI-OSISA TV won by Association Yam Pukri (Burkina Faso); AISI-OSISA Special Award won by Realites Magazine (Tunisia); IICD-Local Content won by Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) and the 2nd Prize by African Languages Technology (Nigeria); IICD Media won by Mr. Etienne Tasse (Cameroon) and Mr. Salif Sanogo (Mali).

Other winners are IDRC Award on Reporting on ICT Research and Innovation won by Mr. Takawira Musara (Zimbabwe) and IT & Telecom Digest Nigeria) while the 2nd prize went to Ms. Bianca Wright (South Africa); the OSIWA Best Female Reporter was won by Ms. Brenda Zulu (Zambia).

The winners this year were selected by internationally recognized African journalists, media researchers, and experts on ICT for Development issues.

The AISI Media Awards are established to encourage more informed coverage of the information society and ICT for development issues in Africa as part of the 1st AISI Outreach and Communication Programmed. The AISI Media Awards is aimed at individual journalists and media institutions based in Africa that are “promoting journalism which contributes to a better understanding of the information society in Africa”.

For more information on the Awards, please contact Aida Opoku-Mensah at aopokumensah@uneca.org

IPI Announces 2003 Free Media Pioneer Award Winner

The International Press Institute (IPI), a global network of editors, media executives and senior journalists, has decided to honour the Media Council of Tanzania (MCT) with the 2003 Free Media Pioneer Award.

The 2003 Free Media Pioneer Award was to have been presented at an award ceremony during the IPI World Congress in Nairobi, Kenya, originally scheduled for 1-4 June 2003. However, warnings about a “credible threat” of a terrorist attack on foreigners and commercial aircraft compelled IPI to cancel the event.

Founder in June 1995 by media proprietors, editors and journalists, the Media Council of Tanzania (MCT) was not allowed to operate until 22 May 1997, when it was finally registered by the government of Tanzania. Working within a system of antiquated media laws dating back to colonial rule, the MCT was born out of the realisation that Tanzania’s media – which have proliferated dramatically since the advent of multiparty politics in 1992 – should develop their own self-regulatory code of practice rather than wait for government intervention through laws such as the National Security Act, News Agency Act, Penal Code, Societies Ordinance Act and Newspapers Act, among others.

The MCT’s, one of the few independent media councils in Africa, declared aim is to “help create an environment in which democracy, free speech and basic rights will finally predominate” by “promoting freedom of the media and ensuring the highest professional standards of accountability” in Tanzania and East and Southern Africa. To this end, the MCT,
which comprises academics, business representatives and prominent citizens chosen by journalists, has dedicated itself to ensuring that Tanzania’s media follow the letter and the spirit of code of practice drafted and adopted by the industry. It has been relentless in calling for the repeal of repressive media laws and instrumental in working councils in the region.

The annual IPI Free Media Pioneer Award was established by IPI in 1996 to honour organizations that have fought against great odds to ensure freer and more independent media in their country. The Award is co-sponsored by the US-based Freedom Forum, a non-partisan, international foundation dedicated to press freedom and free speech.

Previous winners of the Free Media Pioneer Award are the independent daily newspaper, Danas, Belgrade (2002); the on-line newspaper Malaysiakini.com, Kuala Lumpur (2001); IPYS – Press and Society Institute, Lima (2000); EFJA – Ethiopian Free Press Journalists Association, Addis Ababa (1999); Radio B-92, Belgrade (1998); AJI – Alliance of Independent Journalists, Jakarta (1997); and NTV, Moscow (1996).

For further information, contact IPI at Spiegelgasse 2, A-1010 Vienna, Austria, tel: +43 1 512 90 11, fax: +43 1 512 90 14, e-mail: Michael Kudlak at mkudlak@freemedia.at, Barbara Trionfi at info@freemedia.at, or David Dadge at ddadge@freemedia.at, Internet site: http://www.freemedia.at

Linguistic And Minority Rights Training

The Institute for Human Rights at Ebo Akademi University is offering a Course on Linguistic and Minority Rights between 10-14 November 2003. This one-week intensive course is meant to give a systematic picture of the norms on non-discrimination, linguistic and minority rights within the United Nations, Council of Europe, OSCE and European Union contexts.

The deadline for applications is 12 September. Further details of the course can be obtained from the attached course information and from the Institute’s website at http://www.abo.fi/instut/imr/courses.htm.

The Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Finnish Ministry of Education be financing the participation of a limited number of participation from Baltic Countries, from Africa, Latin America, and from Western Russia

Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program

The Department of State, Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs and Institute of International Education are now recruiting applicants for the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program.

The Program is a Fulbright Exchange Activity funded by the U.S. Congress through the Department of State, Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs. One year grants are available for mid career professionals from developing countries.

Fellowships are awarded competitively to professional candidates in a variety of fields including print and broadcast journalism for one year of non degree graduate study and related professional experiences in the U.S.

Full details can be obtained from Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program, Institute of International Education. E mail: hhh@iie.org; Web site: http://www.iie.org/pgms/hhh (Outside the U.S. Contact: U.S. Information Service, U.S. Embassy’s Public Affairs Sections, or the Fulbright Commission.)
"It is the mass media that make the exercise of freedom of expression a reality. This means that the conditions of its use must conform to the requirements of this freedom, with the result that there must be, inter alia, a plurality of means of communication, the barring of all monopolies thereof, in whatever form, and guarantees for the protection of the freedom and independence of journalists."

- The Inter-American Court of Human Rights
   November 13, 1985