Nigeria Ranked 103rd In The World On Press Freedom

Nigeria ranks an appalling 103rd in the world on the press freedom scale, according to the second World Press Freedom Ranking published by the Paris-based international organisation, Reporters Without Borders (RSF), last month.

The ranking measures the state of press freedom in the world and attempts to reflect the degree of freedom that journalists and news organisations enjoy in each country, as well as the efforts undertaken by the state to respect and ensure respect for this freedom. It only took account of events between September 1, 2002 and September 1, 2003. It did not look at human rights violations in general, but just press freedom violations.

To compile this ranking, Reporters Without Borders asked journalists, researchers, jurists and human rights activists to fill out a questionnaire evaluating respect for press freedom in each of the countries. A total of 166 countries are included in the ranking. The other countries in the world were left out because of a lack of reliable, well-supported data.

In the ranking published on October 20, the most catastrophic situation for press freedom was found in Asia, with eight countries in the bottom 10: North Korea, Burma, Laos, China, Iran, Vietnam, Turkmenistan and Bhutan.

RSF said: “Independent news media are either non-existent in these countries, or are constantly repressed by the authorities. Journalists there work in extremely difficult conditions, with no freedom and no security. A number of them are imprisoned in Burma, China and Iran.”

African countries which are ahead of Nigeria in the ranking are: South Africa (ranked 21st), Benin Republic (29th), Mauritius (41st), Madagascar (46th), Ghana (48th), Mali and Namibia (jointly ranked 56th), Botswana (62nd), Congo and Mozambique (jointly ranked 63rd), Senegal (66th), Niger Republic (68th), Tanzania (69th), Lesotho (75th), Burkina Faso (76th),
Gambia (77th), Kenya (79th), Malawi (84th), Zambia (86th), Sierra Leone (87th), Chad (88th), Uganda (91st), Burundi (92nd), Seychelles (93rd), Togo (95th), Angola (97th), Cameroon (98th), and Gabon (101st).

Explaining Africa’s performance on the ranking, RSF said: “wars and serious political crises have inevitably had an impact on press freedom in Africa. The three countries that have fallen most in the ranking in the past 12 months are Côte d’Ivoire (137th), Liberia (132nd) and Guinea-Bissau (118th). Local and foreign journalists were exposed to the violence of the warring parties in Côte d’Ivoire and Liberia, while the military closed down news media in Guinea-Bissau.”

In the overall performance, four countries, Finland, Iceland, The Netherlands and Norway, were jointly ranked in the first position, followed by Denmark, and Trinidad and Tobago (jointly ranked 5th), Belgium (7th), Germany (8th), Sweden (9th), and Canada (10th).

North Korea is the last in the 166 countries on the ranking, followed by Cuba, which occupies the 165th position.

According to RSF, as in 2002, the ranking shows that a country’s respect for press freedom is not solely linked to its economic development. The top 50 include countries that are among the poorest in the world, such as Benin Republic (29th position), Timor-Leste (30th) and Madagascar (46th).

Conversely, the 50 countries that respect press freedom least include such rich nations as Bahrain (117th) and Singapore (144th).

The ranking distinguishes behaviour at home and abroad in the cases of the United States and Israel. They are ranked in 31st and 44th positions respectively as regards respect for freedom of expression on their own territory, but they fall to the 135th and 146th positions as regards behaviour beyond their borders.

The RSF said: “The Israeli army’s repeated abuses against journalists in the occupied territories and the US army’s responsibility in the death of several reporters during the war in Iraq constitute unacceptable behaviour by two nations that never stop stressing their commitment to freedom of expression.”

It also noted that several countries with democratically-elected governments as well as free and independent press nonetheless have poor rankings arising from the prevalence of violence, sometimes from non-state actors. This is most notably the case with Bangladesh (143rd), Colombia (147th) and Philippines (118th).

According to the RSF, “Journalists in these countries are the victims of violence that come not only from the state but also from political parties, criminal gangs or guerrilla groups. In other cases, such as Nepal (150th), the press is caught in the cross fire between security forces and rebels. Such violence results in considerable self-censorship by the news media, which do not dare to broach such subjects as corruption, collusion between political leaders and organised crime, or sectarian clashes. At the same time, the authorities very often fail to respond to this violence with the appropriate measures, namely protection for journalists and the punishment of those responsible.”

To compile the ranking, RSF designed a questionnaire with 53 criteria for assessing the state of press freedom in each country. It included every kind of violation directly affecting journalists (such as murders, imprisonment, physical attacks and threats) and news media (censorship, confiscation of issues, searches and harassment).

The ranking registered the degree of impunity enjoyed by those responsible for these press freedom violations and takes account of the legal and judicial situation affecting the news media (such as the penalties for press offences, the existence of a state monopoly in certain areas and the existence of a regulatory body) and the behaviour of the authorities towards the state-owned news media and international press. It also takes account of the main obstacles to the free flow of information on the Internet.
RSF said it took account not only of abuses attributable to the state, but also those by armed militia, clandestine organisations or pressure groups that can pose as a real threat to press freedom.

The questionnaire was sent to people who have a deep knowledge of the state of press freedom in a country or a number of countries: local journalists or foreign reporters based in a country, researchers, jurists, regional specialists and the researchers working for RSF’s International Secretariat.

RSF said the countries that were ranked are those for which it received completed questionnaires from a number of independent sources. Others were not included because of a lack of reliable, well-supported input. In cases of ties, countries were ranked by alphabetical order.

But RSF insisted that “in no case should this ranking be viewed as an indication of the quality of the press in the countries concerned.”

According to the organisation, “Reporters Without Borders defends press freedom, without taking a position on the quality of the editorial content of the news media. No account was taken of any breaches of professional ethics or codes of conduct.”

House of Representatives Leadership Pledge Speedy Passage Of Freedom of Information Bill

The campaign for a Freedom of Information law in Nigeria was again boosted last month with pledges by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Honourable Aminu Bello Masari and Deputy Speaker, Honourable Austin Opara, that the Bill presently before the National Assembly would soon be passed into law.

Speaker Masari pledged the commitment of the National Assembly to pass the Freedom of Information Bill into law during an advocacy visit to his office on October 8 by a delegation of advocates led by Executive Secretary of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Mr. Bukhari Bello.

He said the House of Representatives fully associated itself with the noble ideals which the Bill seeks to promote and pledged the support of the leadership of the House for the Bill.

At a reception held in honour of the Chair of the House Committee on Media and Public Affairs, Honourable Abike Dabiri, and Mrs. Oluremi Oyo, the Senior Special Assistant (Media and Publicity) to President Olusegun Obasanjo, in Lagos on October 25, Deputy Speaker Opara promised that the Bill would become law “in the not too distant future.”

During the advocacy visit to the House of Representatives organised by the National Human Rights Commission, the civil society team met with Speaker Masari as well as the chairmen and members of relevant committees of the House.

Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Bello commended the House leadership for identifying with “the promotion of accountability and good governance”. He noted that the commission also recognized the importance of good governance in a democratic society, and has identified “corruption and good governance as one of its thematic areas of focus” with the result that it had appointed a Special Rapporteur and a Desk Officer for this area of focus to achieve its set objectives.

He noted that “the freedom of the press is inevitable if there is going to be transparency, accountability, good governance and the rule of law”. Mr. Bello argued that to suppress freedom of the press will create serious consequences for social cohesion and stability of the nation.

According to him, “openness has a great capacity to improve the quality of governance and builds the confidence of the people in the projects and other activities of the government”.

He pointed out that section 39 of the 1999 Constitution recognizes freedom of expression and the press and that this freedom is confirmed as a fundamental human right under Chapter Four, adding that the importance of freedom of the press and information has also been underscored by UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs. Mary Robinson at various forums.
Mr. Bello traced the trend of support for the freedom of information regime and observed that “access to government held information is one way to strengthen participatory democracy and Freedom of Information Act is certainly an effective instrument to measure good governance”.

He observed that the Freedom of Information Bill is guided by universally accepted principles based on international and regional laws and standards, involving State practices and the general principles of law recognised by comity of nations and that these include the principles of maximum disclosure; obligations to publish; and promotion of open government.

Assuaging the fears of some critics that national security might be compromised in an environment of access to public records, Mr. Bello noted that the bill recognized that not all information held by government departments and agencies could be made available to citizens and therefore contained some exemptions to the general right of access.

He, however, explained that to prevent public officers from hiding under these exemption clauses and denying genuine request for information, such refusal to disclose information must be justified by passing the three-part test. These are that the information must relate to a legitimate aim listed in the law; show that disclosure must threaten to cause substantial harm to that aim, and; the harm to the aim must be greater than the public interest in having the information.

Similarly, Mr. Bello said, the bill contains protections for whistle-blowers whereby notwithstanding provisions in the criminal and penal codes, and the Official Secret Act, individuals who release information on wrong-doings; commission of criminal offences, negation of legal obligation, miscarriage of justice, corruption or dishonesty or serious mal-administration regarding a public officer or body are protected from any legal, administrative or employment related sanctions.

While commending the efforts of the present administration in initiating, supporting and ensuring the passage of Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) Act which set up an independent body to stem the high rate of corruption in the country, he noted that the objectives of the government in fighting corruption and ensuring good governance may not be realized without a Freedom of Information Act. Anti-corruption and good governance, he said, go hand in hand with freedom of information.

Mr. Bello said: “My candid view is that the greatest legacy this administration can leave behind is to ensure good governance, and a successful fight against corruption through a Freedom of Information regime. In that way it would have provided the enabling environment for sustenance of our democracy, economic growth and prosperity”.

He recalled that the last Senate took steps in the right direction to create the enabling environment for a freedom of information regime by repealing anti-press laws through the bill for the repeal of media laws repugnant to press freedom and contrary to the Constitution; the bill for the repeal of Newspapers Amended Act 1964; and the bill for the repeal of Defamatory and offensive publications Decree (No. 49) of 1966.

Mr. Bello noted that the provisions of the 1999 Constitution support the action of the Senate as Section 39(i) provides that “Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and receive and impart ideas and information without interference”.

He made a plea for a more far-reaching approach to repeal obnoxious laws, arguing that “Considering the fact that most of the anti-press laws were either colonial based, like official secrets Act, or promulgated by past military regimes, it comes to question whether today, such laws are reasonably justifiable in a democratic society as required by the Constitution, to justify remaining in our statute books”. He stressed that “They are certainly not.”

The Executive Secretary, therefore, solicited the support of the National Assembly, the Civil Service and the Public Sector in the crusade to fashion out a befitting society for present and future generation of Nigerians through the instrumentality of the freedom of information.
He commended the Media Rights Agenda and other civil society organizations who have been at the forefront of the process of the passage of a Freedom of Information Bill in Nigeria and noted that the efforts of the National Human Rights Commission is complimentary; “to sensitize, create awareness and obtain the support of the National Assembly, the Government and the public sector to ensure a smooth passage of a Freedom of Information Act in Nigeria”.

Responding, Honourable Masari noted that: “a necessary component of good governance is the issue of accountability. This includes the provision of detailed information and explanations on the actions or omissions of government to citizens”.

Arguing that accountability involves openness, he asked: “What is openness?” In his view, “It is the act of granting unrestricted access to citizens about the activities of government officials. A combination of accountability and openness permit citizens to effectively confirm claims and assertions by government officials with regards to government’s projects and activities”.

Noting that achieving openness in a society, which used to be closed will not be an easy task, especially when majority of Nigerians including public servants are not aware of their rights and responsibilities, he advised that there is need to create awareness about a freedom of information regime in order to achieve openness.

The Speaker said: “It then becomes necessary for the Commission, the National Assembly, the government, NGOs and the media to educate the populace including Public Servants and members of the National Assembly on the need for the Act.”

He noted that before the present intervention by the Commission, a number of organisations in Nigeria led by Media Rights Agenda, the Nigerian Guild of Editors, the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), the Nigerian Press Council and others, had worked tirelessly to introduce and push the Freedom of Information Bill through the National Assembly. He commended them for “their unrelenting efforts for the awareness created so far”.

Honourable Masari noted that the House of Representatives fully associates itself “with the noble ideals which the Bill seeks to promote” and pledged that the leadership of the House was fully committed to passing the Bill.

He told the delegation that the Bill is at the Committee stage after passing through the first and second Readings, adding that considering the fact that the Bill had passed through a Public Hearing during the life of the preceding National Assembly and “in view of its importance in our democratic polity, it is my hope that once the Committee report comes back to the Floor of the House, the Bill will pass smoothly through the Third and Final Reading”.

Continuing, the speaker said: “In fully associating ourselves with the National Human Rights Commission on the need to pass the Bill, the House has also come to realize that a necessary condition precedent for the success of the work of the Anti-Corruption Commission is a Freedom of Information regime. A Freedom of access to information is a right to every citizen of Nigeria and not the Press. Above all it will benefit researchers, students and other citizens alike. It is therefore necessary to pass the Freedom of Information Bill into an Act to enable the citizens and the government to realize the noble ideals that informed the creation of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission. A corruption free society is the greatest legacy this National Assembly and the present government can leave for Nigerians”.

Hon. Masari urged the commission to liaise with the House Committees on Media and Publicity, Justice and Legal Matters and Information for any technical or other input that may be necessary to fine-tune the Bill to meet the observations of the House to facilitate its adoption without problems.

At the reception in Lagos organised by a group of female editors, Deputy Speaker Opara, who represented the Speaker as Special Guest of Honour, said the Bill would become law “in the not too distant future.”

According to him, the Bill had been passed by the House of Representatives in the last National Assembly, but could not be sent to the President for assent for it to become law
because the Senate did not concur as required by the Constitution. He said: “For the bill to become law, the Senate must concur.”

Pledging the commitment of the leadership of the present House, he said the House was very interested in the Bill and was determined to pass it, which was why it re-visited the Bill shortly after its inauguration and it had gone swiftly through the first and second reading and had been sent to the relevant committees.

The Deputy Speaker said the House was also working very hard this time around to ensure that “our senior colleagues in the Senate” concur and that the Bill becomes Law.

He expressed confidence that with Mrs. Oyo as Senior Special Assistant to the President and Chief Chukwuemeka Chikelu as Minister of Information and National Orientation, the two ardent supporters of the Bill would ensure that President Obasanjo assents to the Bill after it is passed by the National Assembly.

Also speaking at the occasion, Honourable Dabiri confirmed that the Bill had been passed by the House of Representatives in the last tenure of the National Assembly but did not become Law because of the non-concurrence of the Senate.

She said she had no doubt that the House would pass the Bill soon and similarly called for greater efforts in ensuring that the Senate also passes it. She said the Bill was already before three committees of the House - Information, Human Rights and Judiciary - and that a few days earlier, they set up a nine-member Joint Committee to carry out a detailed examination of the Bill.

Honourable Dabiri said once the work of the Committee is concluded, the Bill will be passed by the House and sent to the Senate.

Speaking earlier at the occasion, Mr. Edetaen Ojo, Executive Director of Media Rights Agenda, argued that the government stood to win public support and sympathy for its programmes and policies by putting in place a framework through which members of the public would become more enlightened and aware about its activities.

He said the Bill, if passed, would help to bring people into the democratic process as they would then be able to participate effectively in governance when they have access to information about what the government is doing.

Mr. Ojo urged the government to ensure that Nigeria takes a leadership position in Africa in the global movement towards the adoption of Freedom of Information laws. He noted that South Africa had become the leader on the continent with the passage of its Promotion of Access to Information Act in February 2000, while countries like Malawi and Mozambique had clear and specific constitutional provisions guaranteeing their citizens access to public information, although they had not yet adopted Freedom of Information laws. He added that Nigeria should not be left behind in this trend.

He also recalled that at their meeting in Durban in November 1999, Commonwealth Heads of Government adopted a set of Freedom of Information Principles in which they recognised the importance of public access to official information, both in promoting transparency and accountable governance as well as in encouraging the full participation of citizens in the democratic process. He said with Nigeria hosting the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting less than two months away, it would be a matter of great national pride if Nigeria could come to that meeting and say that it now has a Freedom of Information law.

Mr. Ojo told the Information Minister that members of the Freedom of Information Coalition would be calling on him to lobby him to support the Bill. But the Minister insisted that this was unnecessary as he was already a committed supporter of the Bill, saying “It is my Bill”.

*Media Rights Monitor* is published monthly by the Media Rights Agenda (MRA), an independent, non-governmental organisation established for the purpose of promoting and protecting media freedom and freedom of expression in Nigeria. MRA is registered under Nigerian law and has Observer Status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights.
Executive Board
Morenike Ransome-Kuti, Chair
Edetaen Ojo, Executive Director
Tunde Fagbohunlu, Legal Director
Austin Agbonsuremi, Publications Director
Eze Anaba, Director of Projects
Tive Denedo, Director of Campaigns

Secretariat
Edetaen Ojo, Executive Director
Osaro Odemwingie, Senior Programme Officer and Coordinator, FOI Coalition
Ayode Longe, Publications Officer
Bukola Ogunleye, Programme Officer
Florence Sam Iroye, Legal Officer
Yemi Jossy Oginni, Systems Engineers & ICT Specialist
Kingsley Aisagbonhi, Accounts Officer
Oluwabunmi Oke, Administrative Secretary
Ronke Akogun, Receptionist/Secretary
John Gbadamosi, Administrative Assistant
Rose Akhuele, Office Assistant
Mark Dakmi, Security Officer

Editorial Board
Edetaen Ojo, (Chairman); Eze Anaba;
Tive Denedo; Austin Agbonsuremi

Journal
Eze Anaba (Editor)
Ayode Longe (Publications Officer)
John Gbadamosi (Circulation Officer)

All correspondence should be addressed to: The Editor, Media Rights Monitor,
10, Agboola Aina Street, off Amore Street, Off Toyin Street, Ikeja, Lagos
P. O. Box 52113, Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria
Tel: 234-1-4936033-4, 234-1-4819162, Fax: 234-1-4930831
E-mail: pubs@mediarightsagenda.org;
Web site: http://www.internews.org/mra

Media Partners Conclude Strategy Document for ‘Media and Peace’ in West Africa

The strategy document for a programme of international partnership on media and peace in West Africa has been completed with initiatives under the plan scheduled to begin this month.

The strategy document which outlines a regional programme on media and peace, will serve as a guideline for the partners, including UN agencies, to develop their programme of activities in West Africa. It was completed at a meeting of the regional and international partners held in Copenhagen, Denmark, on October 7 and 8.

The partnership, which began in Accra, Ghana, on July 8 to 10, involved the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) in Accra; the International Media Support (IMS), in
Copenhagen; Panos Institute West Africa (PIWA) in Dakar, Senegal; the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); Media Action International (MAI) in Geneva, Switzerland; the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in Brussels, Belgium; and ARTICLE 19, the Global Campaign for Free Expression, in London.

A mission of this partnership will visit Liberia this month to conduct an assessment of the state of the media and their needs to guide a programme of work to support media development in post-conflict Liberia.

With the deteriorating situation in Cote d’Ivoire, the Media Foundation and some of its partners are also planning a programme for journalists from the north and south in Ghana as a “neutral” ground to encourage the media to undertake purposeful media work for peace.

In Guinea, which has been on the brink of a break out of conflict, there are plans to hold elections in December. The Media Foundation sees the forthcoming elections as critical for peace and democracy in the country. It is therefore organising a programme for the media on the elections, and this is also scheduled to take place this month.

**Exclusive Host Broadcaster’s Right Controversy Resurrects**

The controversy over the Host Broadcaster’s exclusive right to live broadcast of national and international events, especially sports, between the government owned Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and the private stations once again festered during the just concluded All African Games (COJA 2003) in Abuja, between October 4 and 18.

According to the chairman of Daar Communications Limited, owners of African Independent Television, AIT, Chief Raymond Dokpesi, his company sought and paid a N3 million fee to the organizers of COJA to get the clean feed from the International Broadcasting Centre (IBC) and got a letter of assurance signed by Emeka Inyama, COJA’s GM Marketing that AIT will be provided a clean feed from the IBC. The letter informed AIT that it would be required to remit 30 percent of the turnover of its advert on the games to COJA.

With this assurance, AIT went on air to assure its viewers worldwide that it would broadcast the games live.

The tide of events however took a dramatic turn against AIT when two days into the games it was asked to provide written guarantee that during the games, it will not engage in ambushing by taking TV commercials from six sectors which COJA claimed were exclusive to their partners. These sectors were telecommunications, vehicles, hotels, information technology, banks and electronics.

The question arises; If AIT is not to take advert from any of these six sectors where else does it go for advert? In other words, AIT was not expected to make profit from the N3million it invested.

With the tide against it, AIT wrote to the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) the nation’s broadcast sector regulator to intervene for the overall interest of the industry citing section 5.4 (1) and (2) of the National Broadcasting Code which states that live broadcast of national and international events shall not be exclusive to any station and in the event of any conflict, NBC is to arbitrate. Chief Dokpesi also wrote to the Director General of the NTA, Mr. Tonnie Iredia, to plead with him to intervene and ensure that AIT got a clean feed. Mr. Iredia was said to be against the provision of a clean feed for AIT.

Mr. Iredia said: “I have no knowledge whatsoever of any arrangement between COJA and any other person. If you are one of those who entered into any transaction with COJA to which I was not privy, I am not likely to be able to contribute to the consummation of the transaction.”
Due to this situation, AIT failed to give live signals of the sports to its viewers in America and other parts of the world after having promised to do so, after meeting COJA’s initial condition.

For this failure, the management of DAAR Communications Limited was sued for about N3.2 billion ($25m) by its satellite channel subscribers in America.

Coincidentally, it was AIT that saved the day during the opening ceremony of the games when NTA’s equipment packed up and it could not, with its equipment transmit the signals live. It had to hook onto AIT to transmit live signals of the events.

When Media Rights Monitor, (MRM) through a telephone call sought to get the views of the NBC’s Director General, Dr. Silas Babajiyi Yisa, he said he was not aware of the issue and that MRM should speak to NTA and AIT.

MRM further sought clarification, also through phone call, from NTA Abuja. After being referred to four different officials, MRM finally spoke with Mr. Wole Coker, Manager of NTA Plus who refused to speak with MRM on the excuse that he could not see and does not know who he was talking with and would not want to be misquoted. He asked MRM to come to Abuja for an interview.

Commonwealth Association of NGOs Plans Inaugural Conference for Abuja

The Commonwealth Association of Non Governmental Organisation (CANGO) has invited civil society actors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), intergovernmental and government representatives operating in any of the 54 member nations of the Commonwealth to participate at its inaugural conference scheduled to take place at the Commonwealth Peoples’ Forum in Abuja in December.

The Commonwealth Foundation is hosting the Commonwealth Peoples Forum which takes place alongside the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) between December 1 and 7.

CANGO’s Conference 2003 forum is intended to provide individuals and representatives of civil society, NGOs, intergovernmental and government representatives with a unique opportunity to share experiences, present their ideas, identify networking interests, build new and strong partnerships, establish intra-national and international alliances, acquire inspiration for greater volunteerism, and be a part of a range of events that will empower new progress in civil societies and enlighten participants in ways that will enhance the fulfillment of their individual and organisational missions, promote world peace, enhance social, political and economic well being within the Commonwealth of nations and beyond its frontiers.

It is expected to provide participants with a forum to discuss issues of common interests, introduce their organisations, discuss their activities and realise better networking partnerships that will advance cooperation and sustainable impact, build governmental, intergovernmental, business and NGO relationships, expand areas of cooperation, enlarge individual NGO competence and influence at an international platform.

Highlights of CANGO’s Conference include panel sessions for participants to introduce their organisations and their activities; interactive sessions to share ideas, symposia, ratification of draft byelaws, discussion of typical issues affecting Commonwealth NGOs and states with a view to forwarding a communiqué of NGOs’ position to the CHOGM for action.

NGOs and individuals in any of the 54 Commonwealth Countries are eligible to register as members of CANGO and to participate at the Conference. Details about eligible citizens and countries can be found online at the Commonwealth website: http://www.thecommonwealth.org/whoweare/comm.html.
Citizens and NGOs of Non-Commonwealth nations can also be members under CANGO’s Non-Commonwealth membership status. Details about the Abuja Commonwealth People’s Forum are available online at: http://www.commonwealthpeople.com.

Registration is available online. Individuals, governments, business and intergovernmental representatives and NGOs wishing to register for membership or attend the CANGO Conference should complete and return the registration or membership forms to the CANGO’s Conference office. However, participants will be responsible for their own air and ground travel arrangements and other expenses, including accommodation and subsistence.

But participants can avail themselves of special hotel rates arranged by CANGO. Participants can also contact the hotels directly to make their arrangement. Details are available at CANGO’s website http://cangoshq.tripod.com/lodging.html.

Participants from any of the Commonwealth countries can apply for fee waiver. Women and youth are particularly encouraged to apply. Limited sponsorships not exceeding $1500 for travel and/or accommodation is available. But registration for membership will not be waived. But registrants from host country, Nigeria, and any of the 32 countries designated as “Small States” by the Commonwealth can apply for 50 per cent rebate on registration fees.

Applicants for rebate should send an application letter complete with full name(s) of those attending from an organisation, organisation name, full contact address, phone, fax and email, budget in the last two years, country of residence, nationality of each applicant and country of operation, their passport No., expiry and issue dates, and state why they need the rebate, what their wishing

GSM Subscribers to laugh Last As Pressure Mounts on Operators

Complaints of rip-off, substandard services and a one-day boycott of GSM services by subscribers; pressures from the National Legislature and the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) have combined to force GSM service providers to reduce their tariffs and begin per second billing. Globack, the second national carrier which launched its GSM services on August 29 made its debut with the option of per second billing on its pre-paid package. NITEL, Econet and MTN have however promised to begin the per second billing and reduced tariffs from December 1.

The first in the series of pressures mounted on the GSM providers was the mobilization spearheaded by little-known National Association of Telecommunications Subscribers (NATCOMS), for Nigerians to switch off their handsets on September 19 to protest high GSM tariffs and to ask the networks to improve their services and introduce per second billing. NATCOMS’ plan was to ensure that the first three GSM operators, MTN, Econet and NITEL lose revenue for the day and take seriously the complaints against high tariffs and poor quality services.

In compliance, thousands of Nigerians switched off their handsets while some left theirs at home. Though some other subscribers carried and used their GSM phones, the point was nevertheless made by those who heeded the directive.

The Chief Marketing Officer of MTN Nigeria Communications Limited, Mr. Afam Edozie, admitted a “slight disruption” in service on that said day adding however that the network did not notice any drop or reduction in call traffic. Econet’s Chief marketing Officer, Mr. Bolaji Balogun, said subscribers on the Econet Network continued to carry on their business.

At another related event, the Executive Vice Chairman of the NCC, Mr. Ernest Ndukwe, on October 24 revealed that the NCC had instructed operators to introduce per second billing. Mr. Ndukwe made the revelation after a Senate meeting in Abuja on the activities of GSM companies in Nigeria. He disclosed further that it had established a consumers’ arbitration panel in the states to manage complaints against GSM operators.
In response to the agitation, MTN Nigeria Communications Limited on October 20 announced that beginning from December 1, 2003, subscribers on its network will enjoy per second billing and reduced tariffs.

Subscribers on the pre-paid package, “Pay As You Go”, will pay a flat rate of 80 kobo per second while other categories of subscribers will pay various tariffs as would be announced later, Chief Edozie announced. Speaking further, he said pre-paid subscribers will pay N39 per minute for calls within MTN network and N44 per minute to other networks during peak period while off-peak rates will be N36 per minute (within MTN) and N39 to other networks. He also promised that post-paid subscribers will also have their rates reviewed downward.

The House of Representatives Committee on Communications, not satisfied, also called for further reduction in GSM tariffs. It described the planned reduction from N50 per minute to N44 by MTN during peak periods and N36 and N38 per minute during off-peak periods as still too high.

The committee said: “While the House Committee on Communications is encouraged by this positive development, we had expected more drastic reduction in tariff levels. We therefore consider this reduction as a first phase of tariff reductions that will bring Nigeria to a position that compares favourably with GSM tariffs in most other African countries.”

The committee said it had concluded the first phase of its investigation into operations in Nigeria and promised to release a package of recommendations that will provide a way forward that “will help in achieving improved quality services at prices affordable to the Nigerian public on a sustainable basis while providing incentives for the operators to stay in business with better management and improved regulation of the telecom sector”.

IFJ Condemns Conditions For Accreditation For Freelancers At WSIS

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has condemned the restrictive conditions for accreditation imposed on freelancers aiming to report on the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

The IFJ said the “bureaucratic blunder” threatens to keep independent and freelance correspondents from reporting on next month’s summit discussions.

Freelance journalists not attached to a particular news outlet are being barred from the summit, according to the IFJ, because summit organizers insist that all journalists have to prove that they are on assignment from a specific news organization.

Mr. Aidan White, the IFJ’s General Secretary, said: “It is bizarre that this rule has been introduced. It appears to be an attempt to exclude bona fide journalists just because they have no confirmed commission.”

Earlier this year, on July 25, the IFJ expressed concern over the lack of consideration given to freedom of expression in the Summit discussions.

It said recent summit preparations have indicated the reluctance of some UN national delegations to consider media as key stakeholders in the summit process as the accreditation process for journalists clearly indicates that the role of the media, and in particular, of freelancers, is not fully taken into account.

Mr. White said: “In the context of global discussions, the role of the media must be supported and journalists encouraged to cover the event. It is extraordinary that in these days of new technology and changing media, part of the UN appears not to understand what journalism is all about.”

The IFJ noted that the media accreditation conditions indicate that journalists must provide application forms “together with a letter of assignment on official letterhead from their Editor or Bureau Chief”, although the production of a press card itself is not even required.
It regretted that unless a freelancer will be reporting on the World Summit on behalf of a specific media, this rule will not allow freelancers working for a more general purpose to access the World Summit’s discussions.

According to Mr. White, “This process is another form of censorship. Freelancers who show a regular press card should undeniably be allowed in the Summit discussions. Public information and adequate coverage of the Summit are essential, particularly at a time where summit negotiations have been suffering from a lack of transparency.”

The IFJ said many journalists who are freelance - the world’s fastest growing sector of journalism - cover events like the WSIS, speculating on the possibility of articles or material to be sold during or after the event.

The World Summit on the Information Society, which will take place on December 10 to 12, 2003 in Geneva, Switzerland, will bring together more than 10,000 participants from all around the world, including heads of state, civil society representatives, business entities and media professionals.

**Journalism Workshop on Oil Wealth for Nigeria, Two Other Countries**

The Initiative for Policy Dialogue (IPD) is organizing a workshop in December or early next year for journalists from Nigeria to focus the public on the challenges facing developing nations with rich energy resources.

Ahead of the workshop in Nigeria, the IPD will hold two other similar workshops for journalists in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan.

The workshops, entitled “The Hazards of Petroleum Wealth: A Workshop for Reporters,” are intended for business and economic journalists in the host countries, especially those who cover the oil sector.

Speakers will include Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel Prize-winning economist, who founded the IPD. His organization is hosting the workshops, with the Public Finance Monitoring Center. The workshops are also receiving financial assistance from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Network Media Foundation and the East-East Center. Stiglitz, who was also an economic advisor to former United States President Bill Clinton, is currently a professor of economics and finance at Columbia University in New York City. Other speakers at the workshops will include journalists Sahin Alpay and Andrew Finkel, economist Nazim Imanov, and international scholar Jenik Radon of Columbia University.

The workshop in Kazakhstan is scheduled for November 16 to 18 in Almaty while the Azerbaijan workshop is scheduled for November 19 to 21 in Baku.

Journalists selected to attend will be expected to write two articles based on the sessions. Workshop lecturers, including accomplished international journalists, will critique the articles.

The IPD draft agendas for the workshops note that both Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, because of their oil wealth, are test cases and could become role models for other countries, “depending on how [their] leadership decides to handle the challenge.”

The IPD also says it is planning a similar workshop for Nigerian journalists in December or early 2004.

The IPD, headquartered at Columbia University, is an international network of economists and social scientists who help developing countries learn more about policy alternatives.

Journalists who wish to apply for the workshops should e-mail the IPD at journalismtraining@hotmail.com. Applicants will need to submit work samples, CVs and brief statements about why they want to attend and what they hope to learn.

Copies of the draft agendas and other information about the IPD and its journalism workshops are available at: http://www-1.gsb.columbia.edu/ipd/j_workshops.html
Two Nigerians Honoured at ICT and HIV/AIDS Conference

Two Nigerians were honoured at the bi-annual Conference on Health Informatics in Africa (HELINA 2003), in Johannesburg, South Africa, last month for using Internet technology in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Adedayo Adeyemi of Healthmatch International in Lagos won the award for best poster presentation at the conference for his paper titled “The role of health informatics in HIV/AIDS control in Nigeria” while Dr. Olusegun Odujebe of Healthcare International, was second runner up in the oral presentation category for his presentation titled “Implementing a virtual collaboration platform for African health workers: the eDokita Initiative”.

Ghana’s Peter Preko, won the $500 prize for best oral presentation for his presentation on “Use of the Internet to connect a clinic in Ghana to HIV experts”.

The conference, held from October 12 to 15, was attended by about 150 delegates comprising clinicians and researchers in HIV/AIDS, health informatics and information communication technology (ICT).

The theme of the conference was “Communication and information technology in the global fight against HIV/AIDS” and its aim was to present and discuss the gains and challenges of deploying information technology to facilitate HIV/AIDS research and clinical support.

Eighty-six abstracts on several aspects of the comprising 49 oral and 40 posters were accepted for presentation at the meeting. South Africa (with 23 abstracts), Nigeria (with 11 abstracts) and the United States (with 10 abstracts) topped the list of accepted abstracts.

Helina 2003 was organised by International Medical Informatics Association (IMIA) and South African Health Informatics Association (SAHIA) in partnership with Harvard Medical International (HMI) the National Library of Medicine (NLM) U.S.A., the South African Medical Research Council (MRC), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) U.S.A and World Health Organisation Regional Office for Africa. The next edition will hold in 2005 in Arusha, Tanzania.

Kenyan Authorities Reject Catholics’ Request To Ban Achebe And Another’s Books

A campaign by Catholic Bishops in Kenya for the de-listing of Prof. Chinua Achebe’s novel, A Man of the People, and S.A. Mohammed’s two Kiswahili novels, Kiu and Kitumbua Kimeingia Mchanga from the country’s schools literature texts has failed as Kenyan authorities rejected the request last month.

The campaign had received wide spread condemnation before Kenya’s The Nation newspaper published in its September 3 edition a story that the Catholic Church, under its “Kick Pornography Out of the Classroom” campaign, wants the books withdrawn from the literature syllabus because they believe that the books are sexually explicit and pornographic and could corrupt the morals of the youths.

The three novels have been recommended texts for Literature in English and Kiswahili courses for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education since two years ago, and have been taught in schools.

Although those agitating for the books’ ban insist that their themes and content are objectionable, literary critics have pointed out that two of the books have been taught in secondary schools before, and the students were none the worse for it.

Fr. Emmanuel Ngugi of the Holy Family Basilica, who said the church is the conscience of society and must stand up to be counted, objected to the language used in the books, saying it is obscene and immoral.

“There is nothing morally redeeming in the female characters in the book who are merely portrayed as sex objects.”
Critics argue that the three novels only mirror society and that their themes do not aim to corrupt but to correct social mores.

Educationists, on the other hand also opposed the Church accusing it of overstepping its mandate.

Prof. Henry Indangasi, a senior lecturer at the University of Nairobi’s Department of Literature, expressed anger at what he termed as the moral posturing by the church.

He said: “I am passionately convinced that the critics of Achebe’s book are wrong. They are deliberately misinterpreting certain sections in the book to suit their purist stand.” Achebe, he argued, is a respected author in Africa who has not been known as a purveyor of sex and pornography for its own sake.

A Man of the People, he went on, is a satirical book that merely aims to correct the moral decadence in the society, and nothing else.

“Behind the satire is a set of morals to make us laugh at ourselves, and the characters who are depicted as morally depraved. Achebe is not telling his readers to behave like the characters, but wants them to learn from the book,” said the don.

“I would, without hesitation, recommend the book to my daughter because, in reality, there are men who are irresponsible and disgusting like Odili, chief Nanga and ‘ire’ in our society”, said Prof Indangasi.

Nobel laureate, Prof. Wole Soyinka, one of Nigeria’s leading writers denounced the decision.

In an interview published in The Punch newspaper in September, Prof. Soyinka said there was neither pornography nor any sexually offensive plots in the book. He said, “It is totally ridiculous to say that Achebe’s book contains pornography.”

Other voices of condemnation have come from the President of the Association of Nigerian Authors, Prof. Olu Obafemi. He said what they have done is “a clear case of religious bigotry and intolerance, because there is no pornography whatsoever in the book in question.”

Also, former President of ANA and respected poet, Mr. Odia Ofeimum, said: “for anybody to see pornography in A Man of the People, reveals a total lack of appreciation for modern literature.”

He advised African to be careful of this new wave of censorship, especially when it affects fellow Africans and added: “Writing or discussing issues about sex should be distinguished from the abuse of sex itself. Not to make that distinction, he said, was to be unfair and dictatorial.”

Mr. Helon Habila, the 2001 Caine Prize winner in African literature, also condemned the move by Kenyan bishops and Parents Caucaus, saying: “They are being ridiculous. What it points to is censorship, and I don’t believe in censorship. I have read the book. It is aesthetically done, and brilliantly written. It is not meant to titillate in any way. I do not believe it is pornographic. The book does not deserve to be censored.”

The Nation newspaper which broke the news of the campaign for the ban in September, has also kicked against the moves. In an editorial, the paper said Kenya would become a laughing stock of the world if the bishops had their way of de-listing Achebe’s book.

“It will take an exceedingly prurient mind to find anything even remotely sexually offensive in any of the three books. If just the mere reference to sex and sexual relations is in itself offensive, then there’s hardly any book, newspaper or magazine in today’s world, let alone film and television, that would be deemed safe; not even the holiest book,” it said. It urged the Kenyan government not to heed the advice of the bishops to de-list the books.

**NAWOJ Elects Officials Amidst Internal Wrangling**

The National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) on October 20 in Minna, the Niger State Capital, elected a new set of executive officers to run its affairs despite of a court injunction restraining its parent body, the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) from...
convening the conference. The order resulted from a suit instituted by one of the factions led by Evelyn Onyilo. The Minna Conference was organized by the NUJ.

The new officers who emerged from the conference are, Mrs Oladapo Adetoro, Chairman; Aishatu Ibrahim, secretary; Folake Aliyu, Assistant Secretary; Nkiru Onuarah, Dept Chairman; Adejumoke Akinjola, Vice-Chairman zone B; and Hanatu Daniel, Vice Chairman zone E. Other elected officers are Nneka Banuye, Vice Chairman zone A; and Saﬁya Sule Shehu, Treasurer.

The Evelyn Onyilo-led Executive of NAWOJ ﬁled a suit at the Abuja High Court against convention of what it called an “illegal” conference. The court granted its prayer and gave an injunction that restrained NUJ from convening the Conference.

The Evelyn Onyilo-led faction Secretary, Chisaoome Eme, in a press release reaffirmed the conﬁdence of its members in the mandate given to its executive elected at the “fifth National Delegates’ Conference that held at Uyo, the Akwa Ibom State capital between 25th and 27th July, 2002”. She disclosed that NAWOJ held an emergency National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting where it reiterated its conﬁdence in the leadership of Evelyn Onyilo and resolved not to attend the Minna Conference describing it as unconstitutional and illegal.

The meeting also resolved to withdraw the payment of check of dues to the NUJ “in view of the undue harassment and intimidation of its members by officers of the NUJ, she said. She disclosed that the meeting approved the dissolution of the illegal NAWOJ executive council imposed on Borno State NAWOJ, ordering a fresh election as well as expelling Mrs. Funke Fadugba and Aishatu Ibrahim of the Lagos and Borno councils respectively.

In his speech at the conference, the NUJ President, Prince Smart Adeyemi, traced the genesis of the NAWOJ conﬂict saying the aggrieved faction which took legal action against the Minna conference in pursuit of justice exercised its constitutional rights. He asserted that NUJ had no hidden agenda behind the dissolution of the former NAWOJ leadership, adding it was done with good intention.

CPJ Releases New Journalists Security Handbook

The New York-based international organisation, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), last month released an updated version of its journalist security handbook, titled “On Assignment: A Guide to Reporting in Dangerous Situations.”

The new edition, which is available in hard copy and online at: http://www.cpj.org/Briefings/2003/safety/journo_safe_guide.pdf, draws on lessons learnt in the most recent war in Iraq and includes advice on coping with the sustained risks that many local journalists and their families confront on a daily basis.

The handbook, which was released on October 29, is targeted at editors and journalists, and provides a comprehensive overview of security issues, as well as resources and practical information on topics ranging from training and insurance to body armour and the rules of war.

The CPJ said although it recognizes that no handbook or training course can guarantee a journalist’s safety, it nonetheless believes that being better prepared can help to minimize the risks journalists face.

According to the organisation, “recent fatalities in Iraq illustrate the dangers faced by war correspondents. Twelve journalists have been killed in action since the war in Iraq began on March 19, several more have died from either medical conditions that proved fatal in the ﬁeld or from road accidents, and two remain missing. Although many news organizations are now taking measures to better protect their staff - including sending them to hostile-environment training courses – quite a number of journalists still cover conﬂicts without the proper preparation.”

The CPJ said despite the tragic losses within the journalistic community, its research shows that the majority of journalists killed are not war correspondents.
It said: “Between 1993 and 2002, CPJ has documented 366 confirmed cases of journalists who were killed while carrying out their work. While conflict and war provide the backdrop to much of the violence against the press, CPJ research demonstrates that the vast majority (76 percent) of journalists killed since 1993 did not die in crossfire but were hunted down and murdered.”

The CPJ said with the handbook, it hopes to encourage journalists around the world to better educate and protect themselves and their colleagues.

The handbook was written by CPJ Washington, D.C., Representative and Journalist Security Coordinator Frank Smyth, with input from CPJ staff and journalists worldwide. Smyth has covered conflicts in El Salvador, Colombia, Rwanda, Sudan, and Iraq. In 1991, just after the Gulf War, Iraqi authorities detained him for 18 days.

U.N. General Assembly Approves First Global Treaty Against Corruption

The United Nations General Assembly adopted last month a landmark anti-corruption treaty which requires politicians to disclose their campaign finances and obliges countries to return looted assets to the countries from which they were stolen.

The signing conference for the Convention Against Corruption will be held in Merida, Mexico, from December 9 to 11, this year, while the convention will enter into force on the 90th day after 30 nations have formally ratified it.

According to Associated Press writer, Edith M. Lederer, the treaty, which the 191-nation body adopted by consensus, outlines measures to prevent corruption in the public and private sectors and requires governments to cooperate in the investigations and prosecutions of offenders.

UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, said: “The adoption of the United Nations Convention against Corruption sends a clear message that the international community is determined to prevent and control corruption,” adding “it reaffirms the importance of core values, such as honesty, respect for the rule of law, accountability and transparency, in promoting development and making the world a better place for all.”

The new treaty complements an earlier landmark treaty, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which entered into force September 29 this year and requires ratifying countries to cooperate with each other in combating money laundering, organized crime and human trafficking.

The anti-corruption treaty, which was adopted on October 31, commits ratifying governments to require politicians and political parties to declare openly how they finance their election campaigns.

But its biggest feature is a provision requiring State parties to return assets obtained through corruption to the country from where they were stolen.

Mr. Annan noted that because of this provision, “corrupt officials will in the future find fewer ways to hide their illicit gains.”

The United States ambassador to the UN, Mr. John Negroponte, told the General Assembly the treaty was “a milestone achievement in the global effort to ensure transparency, fairness, and justice in public affairs.”

Philippines diplomat, Mr. Victor Garcia, said his country was among those damaged by corruption among high-level officials and their high-powered cohorts in the private sector.

According to him, “Like the war against terrorism, this war against corruption must enjoy the widest possible international consensus.”
Rwanda’s U.N. Ambassador, Mr. Stanislas Kamanzi,, speaking on behalf of African nations, said the treaty will help prevent armed conflict and fight terrorists, who often use corrupt funds.

**Development Gateway Launches Global ICT Competition**

The Development Gateway Foundation has launched a global competition for the Petersberg Prize to honour the individual or organization that has most effectively used information and communication technologies (ICT) to advance development and improve people’s lives in developing countries.

The EUR100,000 Petersberg Prize will recognize work that has resulted in a clear benefit to a population in a developing country or region in the last 10 years. In addition to awarding the Prize, the Development Gateway will share nominees’ stories on its portal. Nominations are due by February 1, 2004.

With the Petersberg Prize, the Development Gateway is seeking to help advance the understanding of ICT’s role in development and recognize leaders in the field.

The Prize is focused on impact on social and economic development. It will be awarded for a significant and successful contribution in the use of ICT for development – one that will have benefited a large number of people. The degree of the success, the magnitude of the benefits, and the importance of the contribution to a development priority, such as poverty reduction, will all be taken into account when reviewing the nominations.

The Prize, sponsored by Deutsche Telekom AG and Microsoft Deutschland GmbH, will be awarded during the next annual Development Gateway Forum, which will take place in mid-2004.

More information can be obtained by sending an email to: Connie Eysenck at: ceysenck@worldbank.org, or from the website: http://www.dgfoundation.org/prize

**CHRI Launches Report on Freedom of Information in the Commonwealth**

The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) will launch its new report to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) on the right to freedom of information in the Commonwealth in Abuja on December 2.

Entitled “Open Sesame: Looking for the Right to Information in the Commonwealth”, the report, which contains four chapters and a set of recommendations, examines the state of the right to access information across the Commonwealth. It will be launched in the evening of December 2, after a workshop on the same topic that day, ahead of the CHOGM which will take place from December 5 to 8.

Professor Margaret Reynolds, Chair of the International Advisory Commission of the CHRI, noted that although a number of government throughout the world have introduced a range of legislative measures to guarantee citizens’ access to information, unfortunately only 10 of them are in the Commonwealth.

She said: “Even the Commonwealth Secretariat itself does not have a disclosure policy. Public release of information is entirely at the discretion of this administrative body and member states.”

Prof. Reynolds insisted that the Commonwealth itself must set an example by implementing openness and transparency at all its meetings to ensure that its functioning is in conformity with the ideals of access to information, adding: “An important first step for CHOGM 2003 would be full disclosure of both the agenda and decisions taken by Commonwealth leaders.”
The report shows that only Australia, Belize, Canada, India, Jamaica, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Kingdom, and Zimbabwe have access to information laws. In the case of Zimbabwe, it noted that the law was so heavily qualified that it was tantamount to having no access to information legislation.

The access to information laws of India and the United Kingdom are not yet in operation while in the case of Pakistan, although it promulgated a Right to Information Ordinance in October 2002, no access to legislation has yet been passed.

The report observes that in the new millennium, good governance and democracy are the cornerstones of national and international politics and that governments that operate like a close shop will no longer remain unchallenged.

It cites the suspension of Zimbabwe and Pakistan as examples of the Commonwealth’s unwillingness to tolerate governments that are not open to their people, saying “commitments to open government must be taken seriously by members of the Commonwealth if they want to be taken seriously themselves. Putting in place people-friendly access regimes is a way of sending a strong message of commitment to democracy and development to the global community.”

CHRI insists that it is long overdue for all Commonwealth countries to dispense with secrecy and information-hoarding and reap the benefits of openness, arguing that although doing so might dismay autocrats, it will be welcomed by democrats committed to building a more dynamic and prosperous society.

It there recommends that the Commonwealth must:

• Call on member countries to introduce liberal access to information legislation. CHRI urges CHOGM 2003 to declare that the right to access information is central to democracy and development and that the heads of government should obligate themselves to adopting laws that are in conformity with international best practice by the next CHOGM at the latest.
• Assist member countries to put in place effective access to information regimes. CHRI observes that containing vibrant civil society organizations and some states with exemplary laws, the Commonwealth is well placed to assist members to design and implement effective regimes. For example, it said, the Commonwealth Secretariat can facilitate cooperation with other member states and provide financial and intellectual resources to support the development of access regimes; its Human Rights Unit can provide training to government officials; and the Commonwealth Foundation can encourage public participation in the law-making process and build civil society capacity.
• Be a role model and open governance. CHRI stresses that each of the agencies of the Official Commonwealth must put in place a clear policy on disclosure, have mechanisms that facilitate openness and must proactively disseminate information about their governance structure, norms and functioning. To implement previous commitments to partnerships between the official and unofficial Commonwealth, the Commonwealth must open up its ministerial meetings and CHOGMs, which currently remain so stubbornly inaccessible.
• Introduce a reporting mechanism to monitor Commonwealth commitments. CHRI argues that declarations of support and intent are not enough and that a clear procedure for systematically monitoring the implementation of pledges is essential for accountability. It insists that the Commonwealth should require its member countries to report to each CHOGM on their implementation of Commonwealth commitments, including those on access to information regimes.

For member countries, CHRI recommends that they must:

• Introduce liberal access to information laws by no later than CHOGM 2005. CHRI insists that as with all legislation, the law-making process must be open and individuals and civil society groups must be encouraged to participate to the fullest.
• Ensure that access to information is effectively implemented. CHRI observes that this requires a recognition that structural and attitudinal obstacles exist, and the will to overcome them.
• Report to each CHOGM on implementation of past Commonwealth commitments. This, the view of CHRI, includes reporting on progress towards realizing the right to access information, as well as other key commitments.
• Cooperate with the Commonwealth’s efforts to assist members to operationalise open governance.
• Demonstrate their commitment to open governance by disseminating information about the structure, norms and functioning of public bodies. CHRI notes that this requires the proactive publication of information about, for example, the basic activities of government departments, their rules of operation and procedures, their decision-making criteria, performance indicators, points of public access and financial information including expenditure.
  For civil society, the CHRI is recommending that they must:
• Create public awareness of the value of a guaranteed right to information; act as a bridge between marginalized people and governments to ensure people’s information needs are known; and engage with government towards creating the legal regime that best serves the people’s interest.
• Monitor the use and implementation of access to information laws. This, CHRI says, includes testing and extending the limits of accessibility; reporting upon the extent of secrecy, the availability of information and the need for further reform; and reminding governments of their obligation to ensure access to information.

Besides the launching of Open Sesame, CHRI will also be organising a Commonwealth Human Rights Forum from December 3 to 4 which will bring together human rights groups from around the Commonwealth and will launch a new initiative, the Commonwealth Human Rights Network.

**Book on Sustaining Community Radio Published in South Africa**

A training handbook on the sustainability of community radio has been published in Johannesburg, South Africa.

“Community Radio: The People’s Voice,” is based on a research project funded by the Ford Foundation, and published by Sharp Press. ABC Ulwazi, a non-governmental organization based in Braamfontein, in Johannesburg, carried out the project.

The 118-page book, released late last month, deals with the role of community radio in rebuilding civil society after conflict and during the transition to democracy.

The first two chapters, written by ABC Ulwazi’s managing director, Mr. John van Zyl, introduce community radio broadcasters to human rights as inscribed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the South African constitution. Issues like freedom of speech and access to information are stressed.

Other chapters, written by ABC Ulwazi staff members, deal in practical ways with sustainability, marketing a community radio station, creating truly community news and actuality, and production of effective and entertaining educational radio programming.

Van Zyl said: “The information is based on 10 years of ABC Ulwazi experience in training and developing the community radio sector in Southern Africa.”

ABC Ulwazi is providing the book free to South African NGOs. Elsewhere, the cost of the book is US$12 plus postage. Enquiries can be made to info@abculwazi.org.za. The Web site is http://www.abculwazi.org.za
African, International Free Expression Groups To Launch Campaign on Zimbabwe

African and international free expression organisations met in Harare, Zimbabwe, last month and agreed to launch a vigorous and coordinated campaign over the Zimbabwean government’s continuing gross human rights abuses and its relentless persecution of the media.

At a landmark solidarity meeting held on October 30 and 31 and attended by about 40 Zimbabwean, African and international human rights organisations, the activists pledged to alert the rest of Africa, particularly the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) about the plight of the Zimbabwean people following the continuing spate of violations of human rights and media freedom.

The workshop, with the theme: “Let the People Speak – Effective Civil Society Lobbying for Zimbabwe”, was organised by the Media Monitoring Project-Zimbabwe (MMPZ) and the Zimbabwe chapter of the Media Institute for Southern Africa (MISA-Zimbabwe) with support from the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa (NISA).

It arose from the belief by the organizers that the infringements of media and public information rights in Zimbabwe had not been effectively communicated to potentially influential regional, continental and international institutions, particularly in Africa.

Mr. Andrew Moyse, project coordinator of MMPZ, said: “This crisis, of course, does not just affect media houses and journalists; the assault on freedom of expression in Zimbabwe – and particularly against the media – strike at the very root of the democratic ethos and severely undermines all other human rights guaranteed in the country’s constitution.”

Besides Zimbabwean media and human rights organisations, other participants at the workshop titled “Let the People Speak”, included representatives of the International Bar Association (IBA), in London; Amnesty International (AI), in London; ARTICLE 19, the Global Campaign for Free Expression in London; International Media Support (IMS), based in Copenhagen, Denmark; Zimbabwe Watch (Zimwatch), based in Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), in Accra, Ghana; the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) in Windhoek, Namibia; Media Rights Agenda (MRA) in Lagos; Journaliste en Danger (JED) in Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in Johannesburg, South Africa; and the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism, also in Johannesburg.

“The time has come,” the meeting agreed, “for African governments to recognize the reality of oppression in Zimbabwe and to move away from the diplomatic paralysis over the worsening human rights crisis in the country.”

They agreed that the immediate focus of the campaign would be the meeting of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, taking place in Banjul, The Gambia from November 6 to 20, and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting scheduled to take place in Abuja, from December 5 to 8.

The delegates at the meeting noted that there was an urgent need for better coordination and information-sharing among Zimbabwean civic organisations as well as better two-way sharing of information between Zimbabwean groups and their international counterparts about their media and human rights advocacy and activities. In particular, they said, there was a need to ensure that Zimbabwean voices play a dominant role in advocacy work.

It was agreed that a network of media freedom and freedom of expression organisations should be established in sub-Saharan Africa to expand the capacity of the Zimbabwe media NGOs to undertake lobbying in the region with the understanding that in time, such a network should be used to support the advocacy objectives in other African countries which are also in crisis.

The initial activities of the network would include a campaign to be conducted in the media in the SADC region, and where possible in other African regions, that draws attention to
the media crisis in Zimbabwe through the publication of advertisements in a spirit of solidarity about media freedom.

It was also agreed that representatives of the Media Foundation for West Africa, Media Rights Agenda and Journalists in Danger, acting on behalf of the network, should go to Zimbabwe to express their concern to the Zimbabwean government and other governments and institutions in the SADC region about the media crisis in Zimbabwe, and hold press conferences to publicise their missions.

In the near future, complaints and petitions to be made to the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights should be countersigned by other media and freedom of expression organisations in sub-Saharan Africa which are members of the network, and irrespective of the decisions of this Commission, the organisations should ensure that wide-scale publicity is given to the submissions through media statements and press conferences.

This workshop acknowledged the importance of a central clearinghouse of information relevant to advocacy work, which could be used as an easy reference point by media groups and other organisations. Zimbabwe Watch was tasked with coordinating the establishment of an online database containing relevant information about the Zimbabwe situation with delegates working on Zimbabwe, agreeing to send them all relevant information.

Brutalised Photo-journalist Compensated

Mr. Akintunde Akinleye, a photo-journalist, with Daily Independent newspaper who was on August 30 battered and nearly killed by men of the Police Mobile Force attached to Nigeria’s Vice-President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar was on October 29 compensated for the battery on him and damage to his camera.

The Vice President gave him $1,900 and another N56,287.00 cash. The $1,900 was meant for the purchase of a new digital camera in replacement of the one damaged by the VP’s aides while the N56,287.00 was to cover the cost of his treatment of the injuries he suffered in the hands of the security officers.

Mallam Garba Shehu, Special Assistant (Media Affairs) to the Vice-President while presenting the compensation at the State House, said the Vice President believed in press freedom and journalists’ right to carry out their professional duties without hindrance.

He stated: “The Vice-President is of the view that journalists are the watchdog of the society and as such very vital to the sustenance and entrenchment of our democracy.”

Mallam Shehu while restating Atiku’s regrets over the incident, said no journalists should be discouraged in the discharge of his professional duties and assured that Alhaji Abubakar had taken steps to avert such incident in future.

The presentation was witnessed by top management officers of the newspaper led by the Managing Director, Mr. Ted Iwere and Editor, Mr. Greg Opong-Oshotse.

Earlier, September 10, the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Mr. Tafa Balogun, while apologizing to him offered him an enlist him into the Police Force if he was still interested, recalling that Akintunde had at a time made moves to enlist into the Police.

Mr. Akinleye was on August 30 seriously brutalized by police aides to the Vice President. He had gone to cover the formal coronation of the new Lagos monarch, HRH Rilwan Babatunde Akiolu, the Oba of Lagos at the Tafawa Balewa Square which event the Vice President came to represent President Olusegun Obasanjo.

As soon as Alhaji Atiku arrived the venue, journalists in the vicinity converged around him including photojournalists to take photo shots of him. In the process one of the men of the Police Mobile Force attached to him seized Akintunde’s camera and smashed it on the floor. In anger, Akintunde was reported to have thrown the flash of his camera at the policeman and then other policemen came around and began to beat him, some with the butt of their guns. They
pounded him until he fell unconscious and then they left him for dead. He was later taken to the Lagos General Hospital where he was admitted for treatment.

Nominations Invited For Award For Humanitarian Contributions Through Computer Use

Nominations are being accepted for the ACM Eugene Lawler Award for Humanitarian Contributions within Computer Science and Informatics. The award, which is given every two years, recognizes an individual or a group who have made a significant humanitarian contribution through the use of computing technology. Its amount is $5,000 plus travel expenses to the Awards banquet.

The award is intentionally defined broadly and focuses on the significance of the contribution itself. The professional credentials of the recipient are not important. The recipient need never to have earned a degree or published a paper, or even be considered a computer professional.

According to HP Labs’ Nina Bhatti, who was a founding member of the award and serves as this year’s chair, “The important thing is that it’s a humanitarian award that recognizes efforts to harness technology to improve people’s lives.”

Some examples of the types of contributions that this award is created to recognize are: application of computer technology to aid the disabled; making an educational contribution using computers or Computer Science in inner city schools; creative research concerning intellectual property issues; expansion of educational opportunities in Computer Science for women and underrepresented minorities; application of computers or computing techniques to problems of developing countries.

The 2001 award was given to John Blitch, “For his leadership in the prior development and rapid deployment of the urban search and rescue robots used at the World Trade Center disaster.”

The inaugural 1999 award went to Antonia Stone, “For her role as founder of Playing to Win and CTCNet, organizations whose purpose is to bridge the digital divide.”

Nominations will be accepted until November 30, 2003. They should be submitted to Nina Bhatti (nina_bhatti@hpl.hp.com). They should consist of at least the following items:

- Name, address, and phone number of person making the nomination.
- Name and address of candidate for whom an award is recommended.
- A statement (between 200 and 500 words long) as to why the candidate deserves the particular award.
- The name(s) and address(es) or telephone number(s) of others who agree with the recommendation. Supporting letters from such persons are also useful.

Further information may be obtained by contacting Nina at Nina.Bhatti@hp.com or visiting http://www.acm.org/awards/lawlaward.html.

ATTACKS ON THE PRESS IN OCTOBER 2003

CNN Correspondent in Aborted Deportation Drama

Mr. Jeff Koinage, the Cable News Network (CNN) West African correspondent who flew into Nigeria to cover the All African Games (COJA 2003) was on the night of October 4 stopped at the Murtala Mohammed International Airport by security men who said they were acting on “orders from above” to deport him out of Nigeria. He had in fact been put back in the plane to be deported before he was later allowed into the country.
Koinage was prevented from crossing the immigration section by a team of security men who told him they had instructions from high quarters to deport him out of Nigeria.

Koinage in an interview with some reporters said though he and his crew had all their legal travel documents, they were told by the immigration officials that they had instructions from the Controller of Immigration to deport them out of Nigeria. He added: “…they still embarrassed us in the presence of several people coming in for COJA”.

Koinage said though the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Internal Affairs called to apologise on behalf of the president, “but I am worried because anything can still happen tomorrow”.

Information and National Orientation Minister, Mr. Emeka Chikelu confirmed the incident but said he did not know what was happening was trying to find out and intervene.

The Internal Affairs Minister, Dr. Iyorchia Ayu later confirmed that he was the one who, on the instruction of the President, intervened and instructed that Koinage, who was already being put in the plane to be deported out of Nigeria, should be allowed in. He blamed the incident on some overzealous immigration officials.

**Policemen Assault Sports Journalist**

Mr. Suleiman Osasuji, an Abuja-based sports journalist with All Sports newspapers was on October 14 battered by a team of overzealous policemen at the Abuja Stadium, venue of the All Africa Games (COJA 2003) where he was on assignment. The policemen unleashed a barrage of assaults on him beating him with their hands, whips, and the butt of their guns.

No reason was given for the attack which was led by one Adebi Kayomi. Mr. Osasuji was working as media officer with the organisers of COJA2003.

**Legislator Attempts to Gag The Press**

Honorable Haruna Yusuf, Chairman of the Kogi State House Committee on Information and Public Enlightenment in October asked other House members and journalists to empower him to moderate the flow of information from the House. He specifically asked that both his colleagues in the assembly and journalists go through its office to seek clearance before granting and conducting any interview.

Yusuf anchored his demand on his belief that journalists covering the assembly tended to be destructive in their reportage as well as alleged that they were being sponsored to bring down the lawmakers.

Yusuf’s comments drew the flack of journalists present who promptly walked-out on the Assembly. The state council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists demanded an apology and a retraction of the comments from the House as a condition to lift the press blackout on the Assembly.

Kogi State House of Assembly led by its Speaker, Hon. Umar Baba Jubril tendered an unreserved apology to the action. He also advised his colleagues to guide their utterances while reminding Yusuf that he could not set the standard of operation between Journalists and lawmakers. In addition, he invited the leadership of the NUJ to his office for dialogue as a means of staving off lawmakers/press face-off.

Yusuf himself apologized for his utterance saying he only acted as a politician.

**Journalists banned from State House**

Some journalists representing three media organizations were on October 27, denied accreditation to continue covering the Presidency at Aso Rock Villa, in Abuja. The journalists affected are those covering the Villa for the Nigerian Tribune, The Monitor and New Age newspapers.
Reports said when they presented themselves for renewal of their accreditation, State Security Service (SSS) operatives at the Villa informed them their names had been removed from the list of journalists reaccredited to continue to report the Villa. The action affected both the reporters and photojournalists representing the media organisations. There was no official explanation for the action.

Mr. Mac Davies Ajibade, a photojournalist with Nigerian Tribune newspapers, one of the affected journalists, narrating his ordeal said: “We were all called from the villa to proceed to the accreditation center for accreditation. When we got there, we were screened one after the other. When it got to my turn, I identified myself as a Tribune photographer. The officer checked through the list and told me that Tribune’s name had been removed from the list and that I should go back because nobody would accredit me and my reporter”.

Sources said the Presidency action may not be unconnected to some recent news reports carried by the affected media on the activities of the government.

Mrs. Oluremi Oyo, Senior Special Assistant (Media) to the President on October 30 denied the report saying it was “inaccurate and misleading”, “willfully and “grossly exaggerated” to make it look as if there was an all-out offensive against the media.

She stated that contrary to the report, no media establishment has been barred from the Presidential Villa.

Her claims have however been debunked by Nigerian Tribune newspapers which insisted that Mrs. Oyo was being economical with the truth.

She said further: “Access passes for all personnel in the Presidential Villa, including the press corps, are renewed once every year and the exercise for 2003 is currently being undertaken.

“Several criteria are applied by the Villa’s authorities in determining the acceptability of the nominees of media organisations.”

She said the correspondent of Nigerian Tribune newspapers did not meet the criteria as specified and the editor of the newspaper had been informed and asked to nominate a replacement.

Defending the President’s record on press relations, she noted: “It is on record that on assumption of office in May 1999, President Obasanjo overruled a decision to reduce the size of the State House Press Corps. Because of his belief in the right of the people in a democracy to be fully informed on how they are governed, the President directed that efforts be made to accommodate a press corps twice the size of the number recommended at the time. It is as a result of that directive that the Presidency currently hosts a press corps close to 100.”

She added: “The nominees of the New Age who the Nigerian Tribune claims were also barred from the presidential villa are presently at work here, as is the Nigerian Tribune’s own photographer who it also claimed had been expelled. The Daily Monitor has also nominated a replacement for its former correspondent who persistently fell short of the minimum standards expected of State House Correspondents.”

Mr. Bode Opeseitan, editor Saturday Tribune, disclosed in an interview that he was confronted by the presidential spokesperson and told to replace the newspapers correspondent at the state house, Alhaji Yemi Giwa. He said beyond vaguely saying that the reporter did not meet the criteria, she could neither say what the criteria were nor the specific shortcoming of the journalists.

He disclosed that Alhaji Giwa has over 16 years experience as a journalist, holds a Bachelor of Arts degree (Language Arts), a Masters of Arts (Communications and Languages), a certificate in news reporting from the Nigerian Institute of Journalism and an LLB degree and has recently been called to Bar.

Mr. Opeseitan said no self-respecting newspaper would put its credibility on line by withdrawing a reporter who had not committed any justifiable or even known offence. He informed Mrs. Oyo to put her request in writing but she did not.
Only on September 17, Cyril Mbah, correspondent of The Monitor newspapers assigned to cover Aso Rock was ejected without reason and warned never to return to the Villa.

Assembly Orders Reporter To Leave Cross Rivers State
The Cross River State House of Assembly in South South Nigeria, ordered Daily Independent reporter, Mr. Bassey Inyang, to leave the state within seven days, beginning October 30. The Assembly claimed that a report published on the front page of the October 24 edition of the paper captioned: Bribery scandal rocks Cross River Assembly, was false. The legislators further demanded that Daily Independent issue an apology and a retraction of the said report within seven days.

The Assembly also threatened a court action against the reporter and the newspaper if they failed to heed its requests within the stipulated time.

The House decisions followed the unanimous adoption of a motion brought by one of its members, Mr. Joe Etene. Daily Independent had reported that some members of the Assembly allegedly demanded and received N400,000 each from eight of the 12 serving commissioners in the state before they were cleared.

A press statement issued by the House on October 30 said among other things that “the Cross River State House of Assembly has demanded an immediate retraction and an unreserved apology to the Cross River State House of Assembly to be published on the front page of Daily Independent newspapers and at least five other national dailies within seven days from October 30, failure to do this, the Cross River State House of Assembly will commence libel proceedings against the newspaper correspondent, Mr. Bassey Inyang, and his paper.”

MEDIA / PRESS FREEDOM AWARDS

Reuters Foundation Fellowships Available
University fellowships of varying length of time funded by the Reuters Foundation are available for journalists from developing countries.

The fellowships range from one to three term and available to broadcast and print journalists at the University of Oxford, Oxford, England; Stanford University, Palo Alto, Calif., U.S.; and the University of Bordeaux, Gironde, France.

Four-month fellowship for photojournalists is also awarded at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, Columbia, Missouri, U.S. The Reuter Foundation also runs seminars, short term training courses and traveling workshops for journalists from the developing world and Central/Eastern Europe.

Further information about applications can be obtained from the Director, Reuters Foundation, 85 Fleet Street, London, England EC4P 4AJ; Tel: (44 171) 542 7015; Fax: (44 171)542 8599; E-mail: foundation@reuters.com; Web site: http://www.foundation.reuters.com/Fellowships/oxford.htm

Deadline for submission of application is December 31

Scholar Rescue Fund Fellowships Available for 2003/2004
The Institute for International Education’s (IIE) Scholar Rescue Fund is inviting applications for fellowships from scholars whose lives, security and work are threatened in their home countries.

The fellowships permit scholars to find temporary refuge at universities and colleges anywhere in the world, enabling them to pursue their academic work and to continue to share their knowledge with students, colleagues, and the community at large. When conditions
improve, the scholars will return home to help rebuild universities and societies ravaged by fear, conflict, and repression.

Academics, researchers and independent scholars from any country and any field or discipline, including preeminent academics, public intellectuals, writers and artists, qualify for the fellowships. Non-emergency applications are reviewed in October, January and April each year. Emergency applications may be reviewed on a more frequent basis. Awards are made to universities, colleges and other institutions willing to host a fellowship candidate and to contribute necessary additional support.

Any scholar who faces a risk of persecution, on account of belief, scholarship, or identity, is eligible. Risk includes the threat of repression, violence, censorship, punishment arising out of the scholar’s work, their prominence, and/or their exercise of fundamental human rights. General insecurity and instability affecting the whole population of a country indiscriminately will not normally qualify.

Preference will be given to candidates with advanced ability in the language of the proposed host country/institution. Limited awards for pre-fellowship English language training may be available, if needed to ensure the success of the campus-based assignment.

A candidate’s legal status is not determinative, although it may be considered as a factor in supporting an allegation of risk. Candidates must secure legal status sufficient to permit awarding of funds prior to the start of the fellowship. SRF staff may work with approved candidates and host institutions to arrange legal status, but under no circumstances will SRF staff provide legal advice to candidates or institutions.

Fellowships ranging from three months to two calendar years will be considered. Awards may be renewable for a second term.

Fellowships are awarded to host institutions for support of specific individuals in the form of matching grants. The Fund does not provide awards directly to individuals. The final award amount will depend upon available funds, the needs of the scholar, costs of living, and duration of the visit.

The aims of the Fund include
* providing life and career-saving assistance to individual scholars;
* preserving the human capital of scholarly communities in crisis, and contributing to the rebuilding of those communities when conditions permit;
* enriching host campuses through the presence and professional contributions of a unique, diverse class of fellowship recipients;
* engaging more institutions and individuals in the active support of threatened colleagues;
* promoting academic freedom as an essential condition of scholar communities and stable, democratic societies generally; and
* raising awareness of attacks on scholars and universities, in hopes of reducing their severity and frequency over time.

More information about the Fund and how to apply can be obtained from: http://www.iie.org/ScholarRescueFund

JAAIDS Calls for Entries for Red Ribbon Awards On HIV/AIDS 2003

Journalists Against AIDS (JAAIDS) is calling for entries for this year's edition of the Red Ribbon Awards on HIV/AIDS. It is an annual event instituted by JAAIDS Nigeria in 2001 which seeks to honour outstanding media and community responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Nigeria and aimed at catalysing and encouraging media activism in the prevention, care and control of HIV/AIDS.

This year, the awards are in five broad categories to recognise other institutions and individuals outside the media, whose innovative, groundbreaking efforts have contributed immensely to stopping the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Twenty-eight awards will be presented this year
under the five broad categories. These are Broadcast Media Category further subdivided into radio, television and general subcategories; Print Media Category, also subdivided into newspaper, magazine, and general subcategory; Mixed Category (Print And Broadcast); Corporate Media Coverage; and Special Recognition Awards.

Prizes for recipients of Red Ribbon Awards have been carefully chosen to benefit journalists and address their needs and constraints. The prizes include laptops and mini-discs for individual winners in the broadcast media category; cash prizes up to the tune of N50,000 for other winners in the individual category; specially-designed Red Ribbon plaques and certificates for every winner. In addition, there will be local and international travel opportunities for winners to enhance their journalism skills. This may be in form of sponsorship to local and international HIV/AIDS-related conferences, travel grants to pursue investigative stories, fellowships etc.

The criteria for entry into the awards are as follows: applicants must be Nigerian journalists and organizations including freelancers working in Nigeria for media organizations that are Nigerian-owned or principally based in the country or published in Nigeria for Nigerians; Interested journalists are to submit three (3) stories published or broadcast between December 1, 2002 and October 31, 2003. Journalists can enter for a maximum of three (3) awards in any of the categories, provided that separate entries are submitted for each award. All entries must be accompanied with the applicant’s CV and a covering letter and must be received on or before November 20, 2003. Applicants may enter in any category. No entry form or fee is required.

Entries will be judged based on the quality of story, sound or voice, depth of coverage, relevance to local situation and grasp of the topic. They must also reflect appropriate use of language and an inclusion of a focus on people living with HIV/AIDS. An independent panel of judges with requisite knowledge and experience will review all entries and determine winners.

All entries must be submitted to one of the following addresses: The Secretariat, Red Ribbon Awards 2003, Journalists Against AIDS (JAAIDS) Nigeria, Media Resource Centre on HIV/AIDS & Reproductive Health 1st Floor, 42 Ijaye Road, Ogba, Lagos; or Red Ribbon Awards 2003, c/o Internews Network Nigeria, 139 Monrovia Street, off Aminu Kano Crescent, Wuse II, Abuja.

Closing date for submission of entries is November 20, 2003.

World Press Institute Fellowships

The World Press Institute (WPI) awards 10 fellowships each year to international reporters and/or editors through which WPI seeks to make it possible for those journalists to report fully and accurately about the U.S. on the basis of personal experience and knowledge and training in the role of a free press in a democracy.

WPI Fellows spend four months traveling throughout the U.S. for first-hand knowledge of American governance, politics, business, educational systems, the media and current social issues.

Prospective applicants must have a minimum of five years of professional experience and be fluent in English. WPI’s guidelines and application forms can be found at its Web site http://www.worldpressinstitute.org. They could also be obtained from World Press Institute, 1576 Summit Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105; Tel: (651) 696-6360; Fax: (651) 696-6306; E-mail: wpi@macalester.edu; Completed applications must be received latest December 31.
“Freedom of Expression constitutes one of the essential foundations of a [democratic] society, one of the basic conditions for its progress and for the development of every man.”

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

Media Rights Monitor
Published by:

Media Rights Agenda
10, Agboola Aina Street
Off Amore Street
Off Toyin Street, Ikeja
P. O. Box 52113, Ikoyi
Lagos, Nigeria.
Tel: 234-1-4936033, 234-1-4936034, 234-1-4819162
Phone/Fax: 234-1-4930831
E-mail: pubs@mediarightsagenda.org
Web site: http://www.internews.org/mra