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World Freedom of Information Movement Gears Up to Mark “Right to Know Day”

The world Freedom of Information movement is gearing up to mark this year’s annual international “Right to Know Day” on September 28 with a series of coordinated activities around the globe, including awards for “friends” and “enemies” of Freedom of Information.

The Day symbolizes the global movement for the promotion of the right to information. It is a day on which freedom of information activists from around the world will collectively promote the fundamental human right to information and campaign for open, democratic societies in which there will be full citizen empowerment and participation in government.

September 28 of every year was specially designated as “Right to Know Day” last year by Freedom of Information organisations from various countries around the world at a meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria, and is being celebrated for the first time ever this year.

For this year’s celebrations, Freedom of Information organisations from around the world, under an umbrella body, the Freedom of Information Advocates Network (FOIA Network), are planning a series of joint and individual activities aimed at promoting the idea of access to information both in countries which do not yet have Freedom of Information laws as well as in those where they already exist. The FOIA network is a global network of national and international non-governmental organisations working in the field of Freedom of Information.

Activities being planned for the day include the presentation of a number of awards, in countries where Freedom of Information laws already exist, such as awards for the institution with the best system of providing information; awards for best web site from the perspective of
the Freedom of Information Act; awards for a media most frequently using the Freedom of Information Act for preparation of its publications and/or broadcasts; awards for best article/broadcast prepared on the basis of information received using the Freedom of Information Act; awards for NGOs which have contributed to the exercising of the rights of access to information under the Freedom of Information Act; awards for citizens who have exercised their right of access to information under the Freedom of Information Act; and negative awards for institutions which do not fulfill their obligations under the Freedom of Information Act.

The positive or negative awards to state officials and institutions for correspondingly supporting or hindering the enjoyment of the right to information are intended to acknowledge the roles of individual public figures or institutions in respecting the right to Freedom of Information.

In addition to national awards, there will also be international awards whereby the results from members organisations would be submitted to an “international committee” invited by the Network to hold an international annual award.

Other activities proposed and being planned by organisations in different countries around the world are:

♦ All-day conferences on current challenges of Freedom of Information;
♦ Release of several reports by NGOs on different aspects of open government ranging from secrecy policies to political contributions;
♦ Public debates between government officials and journalists/NGOs;
♦ Selection and dissemination of the most interesting news stories over the past one year that were based on Freedom of Information Act releases;
♦ Selection and dissemination of the most stupid responses for not providing information and of most the shining examples of attempts to help the public with their search for information;
♦ Compilation and publication of “Black Lists” of those state officials and public figures who impaired and infringed upon the right of access to information;
♦ Publication of posters, banners, cards, brochures, and pamphlets with “Right to Know” slogans;
♦ National media campaigns to raise awareness of the right of access to information;
♦ Publication of reports about the current state of access to information in different countries and regions;
♦ Advocacy for the adoption of an access to information law in countries which do not have one;
♦ The dissemination of information about how to use access to information laws in countries where they exist;
♦ Seminars for local civil society groups on how to access government held information, whether or not a law exists in a particular country; and
♦ Meetings or televised debates about open government and public participation.

Freedom of Information organisations and activists in the different countries are also expected to lobby for the introduction of this Day into the official calendars of their countries by their Governments.

TMG Calls For Review Of Editorial Policies Of Publicly Funded Broadcast Stations

The Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) has called for a review of the editorial policies of publicly funded broadcast stations at federal and state levels to ensure that they do not deny political parties and candidates other than the incumbent access to the media in times of elections.

In its report on the 2003 General Elections entitled “Do the Votes Count?” released in Abuja on August 21, the TMG, a coalition of 170 domestic human rights and civil society organisations that monitored the elections held in April and May, said it was clear that coverage
of the campaigns and elections by the media was not equitable, as the media did not provide fair and balanced coverage to the political parties and candidates who contested the various elections.

It noted that “while some of the problems were technical and structural, and therefore beyond the control of the media, in other cases, the shortcomings were the result of a lack of sufficient professionalism in some sections of the media; a willingness, particularly in the case of the state-owned media, to allow themselves to be subjected to political interference; and the commercialization of political news contrary to the National Broadcasting Code and the Code of Ethics for Journalists.”

The TMG said it is clear that both the Federal Government and the various State Governments have maintained a stranglehold on publicly funded media organizations, thereby preventing them from giving equitable coverage and allocating equal media time to all the political parties contesting elections.

This, it observed, was despite the provisions of Section 29 of the Electoral Act 2002 which stipulates that State apparatus, including the media, should not be employed to the advantage or disadvantage of any political party or candidate at any election.

The TMG noted that during periods of elections, the media, particularly the broadcast media, are very important tools in enlightening the electorate about the importance of voting in elections as well as in providing the prospective voters with information about eligibility for voting, how, when and where to vote, the secrecy of the ballot, the political parties and their candidates.

It argued that during the 2003 elections, explanations about the secrecy of the ballot were critical to establishing public confidence in the elections given the climate of fear and intimidation, which prevailed before the elections, adding that it was therefore necessary to reassure the electorate that their personal safety would be protected on election days.

The TMG explained that although there is a general expectation that the entire media would play this role, there was a greater obligation on publicly funded media to discharge this civic responsibility.

It conceded that part of the responsibility for voter enlightenment lay with the political parties themselves as they could embark on political advertising, special information programmes, and ensuring news coverage.

But it argued that this requires that besides the ruling political party or candidates who have the advantage of incumbency, parties and candidates in opposition should have access to the mass media.

The TMG said: “There can be no meaningful debate of the important issues in the electoral process if some of the players do not have a vehicle for expressing their views. There will also be no fairness in the process if some of the contenders have an undue advantage over their opponents with respect to access to the media, particularly the publicly funded media.”

It also conceded that owing to the large number of political parties and candidates in the elections, there was a legitimate logistic challenge to the media of how to fairly allocate time “equally among the political parties at similar hours of the day” for each of them to explain their programmes and policies to the electorate, as required by Section 29 of the Electoral Act 2002.

But the TMG insisted that regardless of this difficulty, it was difficult to excuse the overall lopsidedness of media coverage of the campaigns and elections.

It recalled that in the campaigns for the presidential elections, President Olusegun Obasanjo and his ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) dominated the media throughout the period of the campaigns and elections and that there was a huge imbalance between the coverage received by him and the PDP on one hand and the other political parties and candidates both in terms of the amount of the coverage and the quality of coverage.

The TMG said the PDP and President Obasanjo as well as the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and its presidential candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari, appeared to have received more coverage than all the other parties and candidates put together.
But it noted that besides the volume of coverage he received, the President was often shown in good light in most of the media reports while some of his opponents were frequently portrayed negatively. It said this was particularly true of General Buhari, who was widely regarded before the elections as the President’s strongest rival, but who received a lot of negative coverage.

The TMG admitted that objective coverage of elections and campaigns is a difficult challenge as facts which are reported will often be to the detriment of one political party or candidate or to the advantage of the other party or candidate.

It also noted that an appearance of lack of objectivity may also be created by the fact that a story has been reported from a perspective different from the party or contestant’s point of view.

But it said what is of critical importance is that there should be a demonstration of good faith on the part of the media and the ruling party or incumbent political office holder while the media should strive over a period or a number of reports to achieve balance and fairness.

It regretted that while the campaigns by some of the other candidates and their parties received only a little coverage in the media, the remaining parties and their presidential candidates were almost completely forgotten and got no more than occasional mentions, thereby creating an impression that they were not serious candidates or parties.

The TMG said although the lopsidedness in coverage was most apparent in the Federal Government-owned media, there were also manifestations of the tendency in most of the stations owned by the different state governments as well as in some of the private media.

It identified several factors responsible for the situation. Firstly, it said, there was a tendency by those in power at both the federal and state levels to view the government-controlled broadcasting stations as the propaganda arms of their governments and, therefore, use them to advance their partisan or personal interests while preventing access to these media by other stakeholders, particularly by their opponents and opposition parties.

It noted that as the ruling party at the Federal level, the PDP controlled all the Federal Government-owned media organisations, particularly the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) and the party dominated them, although not all members of the ruling party even had access to the publicly funded media as those in power virtually dictated who could be heard or seen in them particularly during the party primaries.

The TMG observed that many of the provisions in the laws establishing both the NTA and the FRCN ensured their susceptibility to political control and influence and were exploited by government officials to maintain control over them, particularly provisions which impose a duty on the stations to comply with the directives of the Minister of Information and to broadcast government announcements.

However, it regretted the fact that the stations were often unable to distinguish between government activities being carried out by public office holders which were newsworthy and the activities of government officials which amounted only to election campaigns.

In particular, campaign speeches by President Obasanjo and other government officials were routinely reported as government activities without commensurate air time given to other political parties or candidates.

The TMG however stressed that the tendency of the ruling party to dominate the government-owned media was not limited to the Federal Government or the PDP alone, but was also evident in virtually all the states and cut across the different political parties in control in those states.

It recalled that a number of politicians complained about the activities of various state-run broadcast stations, which they claimed, were blacking out news of their political activities, especially campaigns, while virtually singing the praises of the incumbent governors round the clock.

A second factor identified by the TMG as responsible for the lopsidedness of the coverage received by the PDP and President Obasanjo in relation to the other political parties
and candidates was the financial advantage which they wielded as the ruling party and the fact that the party’s candidates had or controlled far more resources than their opponents.

It said: “Because of the absence, both in law and in fact, of mechanisms for accounting on campaign finances, it was impossible to determine the source of these funds and, in particular, whether they were public funds. The issue is of critical importance because besides being in control at the Federal level, the PDP also controlled a majority of the states of the Federation and therefore had unlimited access to state resources. There was indeed a widespread perception that public funds, both at the Federal level and in the various states, were misappropriated and deployed for electoral campaigns by the chief executives.”

The TMG argued that the situation was aggravated by the absence of any policy of providing free slots for electoral campaign broadcasts for all political parties to outline their programmes and introduce their candidates for the elections both at the federal and state levels, adding that in the absence of such a media policy and as a result of their lack of resources, many of the parties and candidates did not have even the minimum level of visibility necessary for contesting elections in a genuine democracy.

A third factor responsible for the lopsided coverage, it said, was the fact that right from the inception of the political campaigns, especially in the presidential elections, the media actively promoted the notion that the elections were a straight fight between President Obasanjo and General Buhari and thereby dismissed all the other candidates.

Following from this attitude, it said, the media focused its attention on these two “serious” contenders to the detriment of the other candidates and parties in the elections.

The TMG noted that while the state-owned media were encumbered by the inconvenience of their ownership, the private media were largely free of such constraints and therefore generally provided greater access to the media for political parties and candidates in opposition than did the state-owned media.

But it said the private media were not immune from blame as they also suffered from two major disabilities. Firstly, it said, their proprietors often had political and economic interests which sometimes resulted in their aligning with particular political parties or specific candidates, arguing that such proprietorial interests sometimes influenced the coverage by various privately owned media establishments either in the volume of coverage given to particular candidates or parties or in the nature of such coverage.

The second problem was that many of the privately owned media establishments saw the era as an opportunity to make money and improve their financial fortunes and therefore issued rates for the coverage of various news items, including press releases, press conferences, political rallies, etc. The result was that only rich political parties and candidates could afford to have their activities covered.

Besides, the TMG said, the rich political parties and candidates were able to pay the expensive rates charged by some of the privately owned television stations to permanently attach cameramen and reporters to them for all their campaigns and rallies thereby ensuring that they had constant media coverage for all their activities.

It attributed the difficulty in ensuring equitable access to the media for political parties and candidates to the absence of an effective regulatory authority to enforce existing laws and regulations affecting the media, particularly the coverage of political activities.

The TMG said: “The National Broadcasting Commission appeared incapable of enforcing its directives and the laws which it is supposed to apply. Despite all the reports sent to the NBC by various political parties and candidates alleging that they were being denied access to the government controlled media and the NBC’s claim that it was investigating reports, there was never any indication of what its findings were or what sanctions it had taken against offending media organisations or government functionaries, following the reports.”

But it praised the media for the commendable level of voter and civic education it carried out, observing that “thousands of media messages were relayed on various radio and television
stations across the country and in scores of newspapers and magazines to promote the ideals of tolerance, peaceful elections and good order during and after the elections.”

The TMG stressed that given the lessons of the elections, it was imperative that urgent remedial measures be taken to correct the inadequacies of media coverage of elections and campaigns.

Such measures, it argued, should be aimed at ensuring that the editorial policies of the publicly funded broadcast stations, both at the federal level and in all the states, are reviewed to ensure that they do not deny political parties and candidates other than the incumbent party or candidate access to the media and to prevent their being used as part of the campaign tools of the ruling party.

Mr. Mannir Donali, a journalist with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) on August 15 took MTN Nigeria Communications Limited, one of the providers of the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) providers to the Abuja High Court demanding N10 million compensation for unsatisfactory services.

In the writ of summons served to MTN, Mr. Donali is seeking a declaration that MTN is in breach of the subscriber agreement dated October 29, 2001 entered between him and the company; the sum of N10 million as general damages for the breach of the contract; and the cost of the suit.

Mr. Donali listed the particulars of the breach of the contractual agreement to include: failure of MTN to keep and maintain the provision of the telecommunication services to him; failure by MTN to take adequate or effective measures to ensure that he has paid his bills and thereby entitled to communication services; and failure of MTN to exercise reasonable care, skill and diligence to restore his telephone line even after paying the bill to the company.

In a 15-paragraph statement of claim, Mannir stated that he makes an average of 42.7 percent of international call to the United Kingdom and an average 45 number of calls mainly to enhance his news coverage and contacts, which he said he could not do as a result of the breach of the contractual obligation by MTN.

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

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FOI Campaigners Set up Internet Discussion Group

The campaign for the enactment of a Freedom of Information Act in Nigeria is receiving additional boost on the Internet with the establishment of an e-mail discussion group on the Yahoo! Groups website.

Known as FOIcoalition, the address of the group is: FOIcoalition@yahoogroups.com. It is named after the Freedom of Information Coalition, a coalition of civil society organisations working to secure the enactment of the Freedom of Information Bill being considered by the National Assembly.

The FOI coalition group offers members and other persons interested in the advocacy for the enactment of a freedom of information bill a forum to exchange ideas, views and opinions on a variety of issues relating to the campaign efforts and the broader issues of transparency and accountability in Nigeria.

Any member of the group may send messages to all the members using just one email address: FOIcoalition@yahoogroups.com.

At the inception of the FOIcoalition group, in addition to already existing members of the Freedom of Information Coalition, the moderator of the group invited hundreds of Nigerians who have been involved in one way or the other or showed interest in the campaign for the enactment of the bill or in issues of transparency and accountability to join the group.

Response to the project has been tremendous with many organizations and individual Nigerians showing interest in the group.

In one of the earliest contributions to the discussions, Miss Angela Agoawike, the Editor of the Saturday edition of the Daily Times newspaper, wrote: “Very worthy campaign we’ve all undertaken. I believe with much more commitment, we can make it in the next four years … It is indeed, at the heart of our democracy and expected good governance.”
Mr. Dapo Olorunyomi, Media Programme Officer at the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), based in Dakar, Senegal, advised thus: “Since the last Parliament went into history as the one that walked away from doing noble deeds, may I suggest, anchoring the echoes I hear now of the next steps, that the coordinating institution, MRA (Media Rights Agenda), send out a draft agenda of short, medium, and long term actions/activities on how to ensure that we get the horse to the bay.”

In another contribution, Mr. Anthony George-Hill, National President of the Commonwealth of Niger Delta Youths for Peace Condolence, suggested that: “We have to move forward and fast. I think FOI (Coalition) needs to arrange stakeholders Round-table, if we must create impact.”

But in a reply to George-Hill, Mr. Lanre Arogundade, Coordinator of the International Press Centre in Lagos, said: “No effort be spared in making the FOIA become a reality. But we have actually had a number of stakeholders’ roundtables that were hugely expensive to organize.”

He said although he was not “dismissing the idea entirely”, he thought that “members should now concentrate more on popularizing the FOI in their areas of work/influence. The challenge now is to bring positive pressure to bear on the National Assembly in order to ensure a speedy passage of the FOI bill into law.”

Another contributor, Mr. Anthony Osae-Brown wrote: “I just had a discussion on this in Germany today and it is quite interesting to be part of it in Nigeria. Hope we are able to make the necessary impact. True democracy depends on it.”

Replying, Mr. Edetaen Ojo, the Executive Director of Media Rights Agenda, wrote: “I agree entirely with you that there can be no genuine democracy without the participation of the people. Participation is not just about elections, but also in governance and the people can only participate if they have access to information about what the government is doing.”

He stressed: “I am convinced that we can make the necessary impact and that this bill will become law some day soon. But we all need to work hard to make it happen if we really want it. So let us put pressure on our legislators in the National Assembly to pass the Freedom of Information Bill into Law. Call them on the phone, email them, visit them, write articles in the newspapers, send letters to editors ... Whatever is necessary, let us do to make it happen.”

Mr. Lekan Otufodunrin, a seasoned journalist and Coordinator of Journalists for Christ, contributed a news report in which he informed members of the group that the President of the Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria, (NPAN), Mr. Ray Ekpu, and the President of Nigeria Union of journalists (NUJ) have made a case for an urgent passage of the Freedom of Information.

The report, entitled: “Ekpu, Adeyemi Makes Case for FOIB”, ran thus:

“The President of the Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria, (NPAN), Mr. Ray Ekpu, has reminded the National Assembly of the need to expedite action on the approval of the Freedom of Information Bill and other media laws.

“Speaking at the commissioning of the Journalists Estate on Saturday, he noted that the passing of the bill will enhance media practice in the country. Ekpu’s call was also supported by the National President of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Mr. Smart Adeyemi, who maintained that except the laws were passed, journalists would not have the conducive atmosphere to perform their duties.

“The Speaker of the House of Representatives in National Assembly Alhaji Aminu Masari, who was the guest of honour at the occasion, said based on various representations he has already initiated moves to ensure that the FOIB and other media laws are given urgent attention.

According to him, he has asked the committee working on the bills to speed up their work.

Persons interested in learning more about the FOIcoalition group or joining may do so at: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FOIcoalition .
Police Detain Sergeant For Criticising Corruption In The Force

The Commissioner of Police, Lagos State Police Command, Mr. Young Arabame, on August 27 told journalists that the state police authorities have arrested and detained one of its men, Sergeant Musa Usman on account of the submission he made recently.

Sgt. Usman, a mobile policeman serving in Lagos State, had on August 21, 2003, at the Onikan Stadium in Lagos, during a public forum with the Minister for Police Affairs, Chief Broderick Bozomo, revealed that the corruption in the Police was engendered by the abysmally low wages of junior officers of the Police Force and the activities of their superiors who encourage them to collect bribes from motorists at roadblocks. He also revealed that the system was in many ways unfair to junior officers while being over protective of senior officers.

Sgt. Usman and some of his colleagues spoke at that meeting with the encouragement of the Minister for Police Affairs who asked them to talk freely and honestly about the problems of the force as the government was genuinely interested in solving the problems. Indeed, an attempt by the Lagos State Police Commissioner, Mr. Young Arabamen, to cut off Sgt. Usman at the occasion was prevented by the Minister who asked the Commissioner to return the microphone to the Sergeant to continue with his comments.

He then advised that if the authorities are truly serious about eradicating corruption in the Nigeria Police Force, it needed to look into the issues raised.

Regrettably, less than one week after the revelation, the police authorities had him arrested in what appears to be a preparatory move to sack him from the Force.

Media Rights Agenda (MRA) in a statement issued by Mr. Osaro Odemwingie, its Senior Programme Officer on August 29, condemned his arrest and detention saying it viewed “his arrest and detention as an unwarranted assault on his right to freedom of expression and his duty as a public servant to reveal wrongdoing in the Police Force”. It called for his immediate and unconditional release.

MRA said further that it also believed “that it is the duty of everyone in the public service at the Federal, State or Local Government levels, to disclose information, which reveals corruption, mismanagement, fraud, abuse of authority, or any other wrongdoing in the public service and that the arrest of Sgt. Usman is contrary to this principle”.

MRA questioned the morale behind the Minister’s encouragement of junior officers to speak freely about the problems in the Force and by this exposing them to reprisal actions from their superiors knowing that he is either incapable of or unwilling to protect them. It added that it is clear from this development that there is no sincerity in the Government’s claim to be waging a war against corruption, particularly in the Police Force.

MRA called on President Olusegun Obasanjo to urgently intervene in the matter to ensure that Sgt. Usman is not prejudicially affected by the revelations he has made, if the President is serious about his war against corruption. MRA recalled that the President has consistently maintained that he needed people to come forward with information about corrupt activities for his government to be able to act adding that his purported war against corruption can have no credibility if he does not protect those who suffer unjustly for speaking up.

NBC Shuts down ITV/Radio, Rescinds Decision

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) on August 21 suspended the operations of the Independent Television and Radio stations (ITV/Radio) based in Benin City the Edo State Capital but later rescinded the order two days later.

Mr. Ahmed Abdulkadir, the Chief Public Affairs Officer of NBC disclosed in a statement that the suspension was due to the unprofessional conduct of both stations relaying martial music on the radio and television stations following the death of a staff of the broadcasting outfit on August 21.
That statement said: “A lengthy broadcast of martial music, without the accompanying educational or entertainment information, usually signifies a threat to political/administrative situation in Nigeria, and should not be indulged in by a station for any reason whatsoever.”

Mr Abdulkadir said the action contravened the Nigeria Broadcasting code, which states that no station should, “broadcast information immediately leading, or likely to lead to a breakdown of law and order.”

Both stations are owned by Sir Gabriel Igbinedion, the Esama of Benin.

Globacom, SNO Debuts With A Blaze of Innovations

After several operational hitches and postponed launch dates, Nigeria’s Second National telecommunications Operator (SNO), Globacom Limited finally rolled out commercial Global System for Mobile communications (GSM) services on August 29 in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory.

It announced five innovative Glomobile services including per second billing; friends and family; pre-paid premium; post-paid plus; and bundle tariffs.

They come with lower tariffs than the two private operators, Econet Wireless and MTN Nigeria Limited but higher than government-owned First National Operator, the Nigerian telecommunications Limited (NITEL) subsidiary, Mobile Telecommunications Limited (M-Tel) tariff.

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Globacom, Otunba Mike Adenuga, reiterated his earlier promise to provide “first class technology, robust network and cheaper prices”, affordable to all segments of the Nigerian people adding that plans were afoot to ensure that subscribers to the network begin soon to pay N5 per minute per call. He disclosed that six cities, namely: Lagos, Abuja, Ijebu-Ode, Abeokuta, Port-Harcourt and Ibadan would be fully connected within two weeks, promising that a total of 2.5 million lines would have been rolled out by December this year.

On its prepaid service, the equivalent of MTN’s pay-as-you-go and Econet’s buddie, it charges N35.00 per minute or 70 kobo per second for intra-network calls and 80 kobo per second or N39.00 per minute for inter-network calls. MTN and Econet charge between N40 to N50 per minute on the same service while M-Tel charges N25.00 per minute. With its launch it is being speculated that there is going to be a price war most especially as Globacom lines seem to enjoy the support of Nigerians. Globacom sells its pre-paid SIM pack for N10,000, excluding handset.

Globacom promised to begin the operation of the fixed landlines, mobile and international gateway, among others, by the end of the year. Globacom said it was rolling out 250,000 GSM lines in five cities amidst a blaze of fabulous fantastic promises of better services than its predecessors; of future reduction of tariffs; and of great expectations of better and affordable services from Nigerians.

Vice President Atiku Abubakar switched on the Globacom Network at its Switch Station located at Wuse 11 about mid-day. The switch on came two years after the commencement of GSM services by MTN, Econet and NITEL and one year after it was awarded its four-bundled licences bringing to four, GSM service providers now operating in the country.

He also revealed that work was going on on the second national carrier, which he said would become operational by the end of the year, pointing out that switch stations were already being built in Lagos, Kano, Bauchi, and Ibadan with the capacity to provide 365,000 lines each.

Globacom’s entry into the telecommunications industry with its four-pronged license is expected to considerably quench citizens’ thirst for telecommunications services in all its ramifications. In spite of the entry in August 2001, two years ago, of three GSM services providers: NITEL, Econet and MTN and their combined roll-out of over 2 million lines in just two years after commercial deployment, they have not been able to catch up with the demand of
Nigerians for their services. The efforts of the dozen operational PTOs could also not meet the demands of Nigerians for telephone services especially mobile services.

The commercial roll out of GSM services revealed the real depth of the nation’s hunger for telephone services especially at affordable prices. In spite of the general outcry of high GSM tariffs coupled with generally inefficient and unsatisfactory services, the three initial operators could not meet the demands of citizens though MTN and Econet surpassed their targeted rollout by over 500 per cent. However, GSM services have been racked by a legion of complaints. These include interconnectivity problems, jamming of lines, poor reception, dropped calls (calls that prematurely cut off) which were charged, and constant network failure among others.

Nigeria took the giant step at liberalizing telecommunications and bringing telephone services to the reach of Nigerians with the sale, on January 19, 2001, of four Global System for Mobile Telecommunications (GSM) licenses at an open auction and their commercial rollout in August of the same year.

With the opening up of the telecommunications sector to private investors, the right of Nigerians to communicate through telecommunications services, which for many years had been undermined by the monopolistic practices of the government, inefficiency of the Federal government-owned telecommunications service provider, the high cost of access to such services and a general policy framework that inhibited the growth and development of the industry, was restored. The telecommunications space, including voice telephony, data and video transmission, has been witnessing daily revolutionary expansion.

At its launch, the nation’s telecommunications industry regulator, the Nigeria Communications Commission (NCC), indicated that Nigeria presently has 3 million lines. With her 120 million inhabitants, it translates to one line to 40 inhabitants thus exceeding the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) recommended teledensity of at least one telephone line to 100 inhabitants.

The 3 million lines are made up of fixed copper lines, fixed wireless lines, analogue mobile and digital (GSM) lines comprising NITEL’s about 600,000 connected wire lines, 120,000 GSM lines belonging to M-Tel, and another 40,000 on its analogue mobile network. The private telecommunications operators including Multilinks Telecommunications Ltd; Intercellular Nigeria Ltd; Mobitel Limited; Emis Telecommunications Ltd; Bordeaux Telecomms Limited; Reliance Telecomms Limited etc, etc account for about 300,000 lines while MTN has about 1.2 million line and Econet with over 700,000 lines.

Going by the promise of Globacom to roll out 2.5 million mobile lines by December this year, Nigeria’s teledensity is set to beat the rest African countries. If all goes well, the teledensity may be increased to at least 5 million, an equivalent of one line to 24 inhabitants.

**UN Expert Group To Discuss Discrimination In Media And ICT Against Africans**

The United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent will discuss the problems of racial discrimination faced by people of African descent in the media and in accessing education and information technology on October 6 and 7, 2003.

The discussions will be held during the third session of the Working Group scheduled to take place in Conference Room XX1 at the UN Office in Geneva, Switzerland, September 29 to October 10, 2003.

After the general debate at the opening session of the Working Group meeting on September 29, other issues on the agenda of the meeting: a general debate on “the UN programmes and agencies” (Tuesday, September 30); and the “administration of justice” (from Wednesday, October 1 to Friday, October 3), while the discussions on the media will take place
on October 6, followed by a discussion on “Access to education and information technology”, scheduled for October 7.

Members of the Working Group are Mr. Peter Lesa Kasanda (Zambia); Mr. George Nicolas Jabbour (Syrian Arab Republic); Mr. Roberto Borges Martins (Brazil); Ms. Irina Zlatescu (Romania); and Mr. Joe Frans (Sweden).

The mandate of the Working Group, as established by the UN Commission on Human Rights resolution 2002/68 and approved by Economic and Social Council decision 2002/270, and amended by Commission on Human Rights resolution 2003/30, are:

a.) To study the problems of racial discrimination faced by people of African descent living in the Diaspora and to this end gather all relevant information from Governments, non-governmental organizations and other relevant sources, including through holding public meetings with them;
   i) To make proposals on the elimination of racial discrimination against people of African descent in all parts of the world;
   ii) To address all the issues concerning the well-being of Africans and people of African decent contained in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action;

b.) To propose measures to ensure full and effective access to the justice system by people of African descent;

c.) To submit recommendations on the design, implementation and enforcement of effective measures to eliminate racial profiling of people of African descent;

d.) To elaborate short-, medium- and long-term proposals for the elimination of racial discrimination against people of African descent bearing in mind the need for close collaboration with international and development institutions and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system to promote the human rights of people of African descent, inter alia through:
   i) Improving the human rights situation of people of African descent by devoting special attention to their needs, inter alia through the preparation of specific programmes of action;
   ii) Designing special projects, in collaboration with people of African descent, to support their initiatives at the community level and to facilitate the exchange of information and technical know-how between these populations and experts in these areas;
   iii) Developing programmes intended for people of African descent allocating additional investments to health systems, education, housing, electricity, drinking water and environmental control measures and promoting equal opportunities in employment, as well as other affirmative or positive action initiatives, within the human rights framework.”

Non-governmental organizations that have consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and non-governmental organizations that were accredited for the World Conference against Racism have been invited to attend the session.

Interested NGOs are invited to submit the names of their representatives who will attend the session by fax to: +41 22 917 90 50 on letterhead, signed by the appropriate official of the organization.

Civil Society Organisations Launch Campaign for Nigeria’s Ratification of Anti-Corruption Treaty

Civil Society Organisations in Nigeria have launched a campaign to pressurize the Federal Government to ratify the Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption adopted by the African Union in July.

The Zero Corruption Coalition (ZCC), a coalition of non-governmental organisations (NGO) working on corruption issues, and the Independent Advocacy Project (IAP), a good
governance group, are calling on the government to ratify the Convention as it would assist
Nigeria “in living up to its New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) promises”.

The AU has adopted a convention to combat corruption following concern by African
leaders about the negative effects of corruption and impunity on the political, economic, social
and cultural stability in African states and its devastating effects on development.

The Convention, the first corruption specific African regional instrument, was adopted
by African Heads of State and Governments at their summit which took place in Maputo,
Mozambique, in July. It requires the ratification of at least 15 countries to come into force.

The objectives of the Convention are to:

- Promote and strengthen the development in Africa by each state party of mechanisms
  required to prevent, detect, punish and eradicate corruption and related offences in the public
  and private sectors.
- Promote, facilitate and regulate cooperation among the state parties to ensure the
effectiveness of measures and actions to prevent, punish and eradicate corruption and related
offences in Africa.
- Coordinate and harmonise the policies and legislation between state parties for the purposes
  of prevention, detection, punishment and eradication of corruption on the continent.
- Promote socio-economic development by removing obstacles to the enjoyment of economic,
social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights.
- Establish the necessary conditions to foster transparency and accountability in the
  management of public affairs.

The Convention requires each state party to adopt legislative and other measures to give
effect to the right of access to any information that is required to assist in the fight against
corruption and related offences.

By ratifying the Convention, each state party also undertakes to create an enabling
environment that will allow civil society and the media to hold governments to the highest levels
of transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs as well as consult with
and provide for the participation of civil society in the monitoring process of the implementation
of the Convention.

The Convention imposes an obligation on state parties to adopt legislative and other
measures to prohibit the use of funds acquired through illegal and corrupt practices to finance
political parties and incorporate the principles of transparency in the funding of political parties.

The Convention was initially approved by ministers of the relevant departments in the
various member countries at the AU’s Ministerial Conference held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia,
between September 18 and 19, last year. It was later approved by the Executive Council of the
AU at its meeting held in Ndjameña, Chad, between March 5 and 6, this year before it was
adopted at the AU Heads of State summit in Maputo in July.

The ZCC will initiate a series of media activities to draw public attention to the
Convention and is asking the government to reinforce the legal framework for its war against
corruption by ratifying and domesticating the Convention.

The IAP also called on civil society organisations in the country to pressurize the federal
government to ratify the Convention saying that endorsing it would assist the government in
living up to its NEPAD promises since “transparency and accountability are key components of
NEPAD and the Convention is a key instrument in promoting transparency in Nigeria and the
rest of the continent.”

The organisation admonished civil society organisations in a statement issued in Lagos
to “lobby the federal government through the foreign affairs and justice ministries to ratify the
Convention.”

It argued that the adoption of the Convention presents a unique opportunity for anti-
corruption and pro-democracy activists to support the process of lobbying for the ratification
of the Convention.
The organisation also reminded civil society organisations that when it comes into force, the Convention “would provide activists with a useful tool to hold government accountable as it guarantees access to information and the participation of civil society and the media in monitoring the implementation of the instrument.”

**IFJ Hosts Conference on Public Service Broadcasting in October**

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) will host a conference at the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium, on October 20 with the theme “Public Service Values in the Information Age: European Models for Broadcasting.”

Sessions at the conference will deal with issues including the future of public service broadcasting, public broadcasting in the global economy and new broadcasting values for new democracies.

Specific session will include:

- “The Future of Public Service Broadcasting”, which will examine the issue of market failings and the responsibility of public broadcasting; democracy and society; combating social exclusion; the challenge of digital era, priorities for international policy-making; the European models; and quality content and services provide the basis for success. The session will be chaired by Christine Ockrent of France Télévisions, while the lead presentation will be made by Christian S. Nissen, Director General of Danish Radio. This will be followed by panel discussions by Pat Cox, Chairman of European Parliament; Karol Jakubowicz of the Polish Broadcasting Council and a Council of Europe Expert.

- “Public Broadcasting in the Global Economy”, which will examine the General Agreement on Trade and Services; the World Summit on the Information Society; globalisation of media ownership and information flow; setting and maintaining standards; and social conditions and creativity. The session will be chaired by Boris Bergant of the European Broadcasting Union.

- “New Broadcasting Values for New Democracies”, which will discuss public broadcasting crisis in enlargement countries; breaking the structural and legal logjam; political and professional deficits; define structures to build public confidence; and how to tackle the funding crisis. The topics will be discussed by Gustl Glattfelder, Chairman of the European Federation of Journalists and other panelists.

**AMARC Appoints New Secretary General**

The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) has appointed Mr. Marcelo Solervicens as its new Secretary General.

Mr. Solervicens is an international development consultant and a former Director General of Radio Centre Ville in Montreal, Canada. He will oversee the operations of AMARC’s International Secretariat in Montreal and coordinate AMARC’s worldwide network of community radio broadcasters.

Mr. Solervicens’ appointment follows the adoption of an action plan at AMARC’s Eighth World Conference held in Kathmandu in February 2003, which calls for renewed advocacy and support for community radio development.

AMARC said it will seek international recognition of community broadcasting within the framework of human rights and social development, and in the context of specific events, such as the World Summit on the Information Society.
MRA Joins International FOI Advocates Network

Media Rights Agenda (MRA) has joined the Freedom of Information Advocates Network (FOIA Network), a global network of national and international non-governmental organisations working in the field of Freedom of Information.

The Coordinator of the Network, Karen Andreasyan, notified MRA on August 14 of its nomination to the network. MRA accepted the offer of membership on August 27 when its Executive Director, Mr. Edetaen Ojo, signed the Memorandum establishing the network as evidence of its endorsement of the philosophy and principles of the network.

Founded on September 28, 2002, the Network unifies representatives of national and international NGOs working in the field of Freedom of Information. It is open for all NGOs that are active in promoting the right to information.

The establishment of the network is based on the need to coordinate the efforts of organizations working actively in the freedom of information area and seeks to improve the possibilities for campaigning, advocacy, information exchange and support, than if all organizations were working on separate projects.

The primary aims of the network are:

- To promote the adoption of FOI laws in countries that lack such legislation by joining efforts to share the experience that have been gained from successful campaigns for the adoption of legislation in countries which now have such laws; and
- To support the implementation of FOI laws in countries that already have them by sharing experiences of educating the public on the right to ask for information, of campaigning for increased public demand for information, of monitoring the implementation of FOI laws, of provision of legal advice to those seeking access to information, of litigation to challenge refusals to provide information, and of technical assistance provided to governments and other bodies thereby creating conditions for the successful implementation of FOI laws.

The network believes that its goals can be achieved through a range of activities and project carried out by its members working together. Recognizing that funding may be necessary to carry out some of these activities, the members of the network have committed themselves to raising funds for these joint activities and to carrying them out as needs demand and as funds allow.

Based on their needs and experiences, the existing members of the network have produced a list of several such activities and initiatives that the network will be able to undertake in support of freedom of information. These include:

- Promotion before international bodies and amongst civil society organizations of an International Freedom of Information “Right to Know” Day, being September 28 of every year;
- Promotion and development of international standards on the right of access to information, advocating for this right at the national level and by international bodies;
- Carrying out joint projects in the areas in which members of the network operate;
- Sharing information about activities and experiences as a core activity of the network, following which the members agree to make reasonable efforts to contribute to this exchange of experiences, including by contributing material to the Website of the network as well as to other electronic or printed publications and and at meetings and other forums for information exchange established by the network; and
- Promoting its activities through use of a common Logo, which all members of the network will make use of in common activities of the network and may make use of in other circumstances so long as the use of the logo is in line with the aims and objectives of the network.

The network is managed by an Advisory Board made up of representatives of NGO members of the network and selected by other members and representing all regions of the world.

The tasks of the Advisory Board are developing the procedures by which the network operates, including the procedures by which new members will be invited to join the network.
and by which future Advisory Boards will be formed; identifying new members for the network; coordinating the work of the network and liaising with the delegated coordinator of the network; providing advice on the projects carried out under the auspices of the network; agreeing on the location of the annual meeting and other events and activities; and promoting the activities and projects of the network, including the Freedom of Information: “Right to Know” Day.

The network also has a coordinator whose role includes coordinating the activities of the network, including joint projects being carried out by members and other campaigning activities.

APC Criticizes Draft Declaration and Action Plan for WSIS

The Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and its Women’s Networking Support Programme (WNSP) have criticized the draft declaration and plan of action for the United Nations’ World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) for failing to address important issues.

In detailed documents submitted to the secretariat of the Summit, the APC and the WNSP recognised the efforts of the WSIS drafting committee to include the concerns and interests of the many governments, private sector and civil society stakeholders taking part in the process which will culminate in the first ever UN Summit dedicated to communications in Geneva, Switzerland in December.

But the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) activists said: “there are critical issues (that) are not addressed sufficiently, if at all”. APC and WNSP criticised the draft documents, which include a declaration and action plan, for:

- their reluctance to explicitly confront the fact that fundamental political, social and economic inequalities shape the world;
- a lack of acknowledgment that gender inequality is central in broader social inequality;
- not acknowledging that without greater access to power and decision-making and equitable redistribution of available resources, the world is unlikely to reduce the gap between the powerful and the powerless;
- lacking awareness on proposals around the “information security agenda” that threaten to further harm already weakened human rights in areas such as privacy and data protection;
- their scant reference to the impacts on the environment in the information society resulting from new technologies and infrastructure; and
- their insufficient acknowledgement of the negative impact of Intellectual Property Rights on access to information and knowledge, and on technological innovation.

The WSIS secretariat will compile contributions from governments, intergovernmental organisations, the private sector and civil society (the “stakeholders”). The contributions will be considered, in the re-drafting of the Declaration and Action Plan, which will be negotiated by all stake-holders, during the third preparatory conference (PrepCom 3) in September 2003, and endorsed or approved during the first Summit by the world’s governments in Geneva in December 2003.

All stake-holders will be committed to carrying out the activities laid out in the action plan, and this process of negotiation will be the emphasis of the second phase of the WSIS, culminating in a second World Summit in Tunis in 2005.

The documents that APC and the APC WNSP have submitted to WSIS Secretariat will be used together with other contributions from all sectors.

Digital Opportunity Channel Launches Special Coverage Of WSIS

The Digital Opportunity Channel (www.digitalopportunity.org) has created a special coverage section at its web site dedicated to the upcoming World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).
The resource will feature news and analyses about the summit from a civil society perspective - especially non-governmental organisations (NGOs) based in the developing world.

It will also feature an online discussion about the summit entitled “Information Society: Voices from the South”, moderated by Partha Pratim Sarker of BytesForAll.org.

Those wishing to be part of the discussion can join at: http://www.digitalopportunity.org/article/frontpage/308/4726.

The channel, edited by OneWorld South Asia in New Delhi and the Benton Foundation’s Digital Divide Network in Washington, DC, focuses on the role of information and communications technologies (ICT) in global development and strategies for bridging the digital divide internationally.

WMD Calls For Items On Transparency, Accountability, And Access To Information

The World Movement for Democracy (WMD) is gathering information for the October to November 2003 issue of the “What’s Being Done?” section of its web site with the theme “Transparency, Accountability, and Access to Information.” The issue is scheduled to be launched in mid-October.

The World Movement plans to focus the section on groups working at the local, regional, and international levels to promote democratic governance, transparency, and accountability in governments and to fight corruption.

It is specifically interested in projects concerning the following areas: “Accountability in Public and Governmental Institutions,” “Corporate Governance,” “Political Finance,” and “Access to Information.” The importance of transparency and accountability was discussed during the World Movement’s Second Assembly in Sao Paulo, Brazil, from November 12 to 15, 2000.

Information falling within the relevant theme may be submitted with a brief description of the activity, contact information, and a web site address by e-mail to world@ned.org or by fax to: +1-202-293-0775 by September 30, 2003.

Training Pack ‘ICT Policy for Civil Society’ Released

The Association for Progressive Communications (APC), based in Johannesburg, South Africa, and the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization (CTO), based in London, the United Kingdom, have announced the release of “ICT Policy for Civil Society” training pack.

The pack includes a curriculum and accompanying materials to build the capacity of civil society organizations to understand and engage policy and regulation related to information and communication technologies (ICTs).

The course based on the curriculum has so far been offered in Southern and Eastern Africa and is being planned for Latin America in the near future.

The training pack is for a five-day course with each session (or “module”) planned to last approximately 90 minutes. The modules can be used stand-alone as training on a particular topic or used together as part of a longer course.

The organizers expect that at the end of the course, participants will be able to:

- Explain the importance of ICT policy for civil society
- List the elements of a framework for ICT policy that is inclusive, gender sensitive and with a developmental focus
- Understand how policies are directed and for what reasons, and how to prioritise policies, regulations and markets
- Demonstrate an understanding of the main elements of Internet and ICT technology, economics and governance
- Explain the main ICT policies at a national, regional and global level
- Explain key ICT policy areas, including universality, intellectual property, language issues, indigenous knowledge and open source
- Explain the relevance of civil liberties issues in the Information Age
- Develop an advocacy strategy appropriate to the needs of their organisation to engage with ICT policies

The course has a number of modules of approximately 90 minutes each. The modules are: Train-the-Trainers pre-session; Welcome, Introductions, and what is ICT policy; Why CSOs and ICT Policy? The digital divide; ICT and development; ICT Policy, global, regional, national; World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS); Advocacy; Gender and ICTs, Internet Basics; Internet Governance and Regulation; Internet Rights and Right to Communicate; Universality & telecentres; Intellectual property, Open Source & knowledge; Social Exclusion; Security, privacy, civil liberties in the information age; and Media, content and language issues.

Course on Advocacy and Policy Influencing in October

The International NGO Training and Research Center (INTRAC) in Oxford in the United Kingdom is inviting NGO representatives from around the world to take a course on Advocacy and Policy Influencing, scheduled to take place from October 13 to 17, 2003.

The five-day course aims to give participants, from Northern and Southern non-governmental organisations, a thorough understanding of the policy formulation process and how they can influence it. Participants will also be exposed to skills required to formulate effective advocacy strategies, implement appropriate workplans and incorporate monitoring and evaluation systems.

By the end of the course, participants are expected to have experience in:
- Identifying or framing the issue
- Understanding the policy making process
- Working in the global advocacy environment
- Identifying levers of influence
- Planning for maximum impact using resources to optimum effect
- Monitoring and evaluation systems to improve performance
- Looking at the organisational implications of integrating advocacy and policy influencing work

More information about the course and how to apply can be obtained by contacting the Training and Logistics Co-ordinator Rebecca Blackshaw at r.blackshaw@intrac.org

Media Research Seminar to Hold in South Africa

African media entrepreneurs, publishers, and researchers are invited to an advertising research symposium on the use of “lifestyle measurements” (LSMs) and other tools for improving media impact in the continent.

The one-day symposium, to be hosted by the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF), will include a keynote presentation by a leading international expert, Tony Jarvis, who is senior vice president and director of the Strategic Insights Group at Grey Global Group’s Mediacom in the United States. There will also be the release of new research on the use of LSMs in Africa.

The symposium will take place at Crowne Plaza, Sandton in South Africa on October 8, 2003.
The event is the fourth in SAARF’s media audience research series, which seeks to keep African publishers ahead of world trends in an increasingly fragmented market.

Jarvis will also take questions from the floor. He will present two papers, one on media optimizers and one on the future of media research measurement methodologies. Other speakers include the first African to present a paper at the symposium, Tendai Mhizha, CEO of Research International Zimbabwe, who will speak on “The Use of LSMs in Africa.”

Additional speakers include Ian Garland from the United States, Lothar Hannen from Germany, Jan Kujawski from Poland, and Paul Baynton from the United Kingdom.

Other topics that will be addressed are statistical fusion, the challenges of TV measurement in light of new technological developments, electronic measurement of Outdoor and Radio, and readership survey innovations in Poland.

No scholarships are available for this event. All participants will be expected to pay about US$226 as entry fee, which does not include hotel accommodation.

There is no deadline for bookings, but seats are limited and will be allocated on an early bird basis.

Anyone interested in booking a seat should telephone (+27-11) 463-5340, fax (+27-11) 463-5010, or e-mail saarf@saarf.co.za.


The four-day workshop will link strategic communication, media relations, and message design and delivery. It will provide hands-on learning in four areas: Developing Winning Messages; Crisis Management; Camera/Microphone Readiness; and Internet Monitoring and Marketing.

The workshop will be jointly facilitated by Clare Arthurs of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Moncef M. Bouhafa of the CDC.

The aspect of the workshop on Developing Winning Messages will focus on how to think more strategically. Using a simple three-part process, CDC’s workshop will help participants develop messages for their issues or organisations.

The Crisis Management component will focus on how to react to negative press that can harm the credibility of agencies or businesses. The CDC emphasises a systems approach based on the participant’s own cases and needs. Previous emphases have included such areas as family planning, domestic violence, and rights based programming.

The Camera/Microphone Readiness training will deal with how to be camera ready and camera smart when being interviewed. It will also help the participants to get their messages out.

The Internet Monitoring and Marketing aspects will train participants on how to use the internet to monitor the media environment and market their ideas. It will also train them on how to build strategic relationships to promote their issues.

The deadline for registration is September 25, 2003. The workshop tuition is $1,600 per participant, which includes four night’s hotel with breakfast, the trainer costs, background and course materials, three half hour individual executive coaching sessions, and all coffee breaks.

More information about the workshop or registration details can be obtained from Moncef M. Bouhafa, the Center for Development Communication, Ethical Approaches to Participatory Communication in Development, P.O. Box 25228, Washington DC 20007. Telephone: 1 301-765-1175, Fax: 1 301-765-2218, Mobile: 1 301-728-5242. E-mail: IEMTW@cendevcom.org
News Xchange Conference To Focus On Journalists’ Safety

The next annual News Xchange conference will take place in Budapest, Hungary, on November 6 and 7, with a special focus on ensuring the safety of journalists.

Media philanthropist George Soros and Gro Harlem Brundtland, the recently retired director general of the World Health Organization, are scheduled to be the keynote speakers.

The conference will focus on the controversial issue of the safety of journalists after a year of international conflicts in which media workers found themselves in unusually deadly situations. Ideas to be discussed include the practice of media companies increasing the use of the security advisers and armed guards, and the question of whether the killing of journalists should be considered a war crime under the Geneval Convention. Experts from such places as the International News Safety Institute will speak on the topic.

The conference will also feature the launch of a joint study by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Cardiff School of Journalism on war reporting and the policy of “embedding” journalists with the military.

The 2002 conference took place in Ljubljana, Slovenia, and attracted 280 delegates from 35 countries.

The News Xchange organization believe that the conference’s popularity stems from its non-profit status.

The conference receives assistance from a variety of sponsors, including European Broadcasting Union (EBU), European News Exchange (ENEX), CNN, and other commercial broadcasting networks. The result, said News Xchange organizers, is a conference for news broadcasters that is both affordable and relevant.

More information about the conference may be obtained from: The News Xchange at 43-51 Great Titchfield Street, London W1W 7DA. Tel.: +44 (0) 20 7631 4538. Fax: +44 (0) 20 7631 4113, or by visiting the News Xchange Web site at: http://www.newsxchange.org

ATTACKS ON THE PRESS IN AUGUST 2003

Photojournalist Brutalised By Vice President’s Aides

A photojournalist, Akintunde Akinleye of Daily Independent newspapers was on August 30 seriously brutalized by police aides to the Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar.

Akintunde 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 came, 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. 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.

The Lagos state Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Dele Alake, himself a journalist added salt to injuries in the course of the whole incident by his utterances. After Akintunde had been brutalized, journalists at the venue protested to him. He allegedly told the journalists to substantiate their claim before he would do anything. His reply infuriated them and they threatened to leave the venue of the coronation. He also told them not to bother to return to the venue or reception of the coronation including the Alausa the seat of the Lagos State government, adding that the brutality visited on Akintunde was one of the hazards of the profession.
The assault received widespread condemnation both locally and internationally.

Media Rights Agenda (MRA) wrote to the Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar to protest “the unwarranted and criminal assault” and called for the prosecution of the policemen responsible for the “reprehensible act”.

In the letter signed by its Executive Director, Mr. Edetaen Ojo and copied to others including President Olusegun Obasanjo, The Inspector-General of Police, Chairman of Police Service Commission, the Honourable Minister for Police Affairs, President, Nigeria Union of Journalists, President, Nigerian Guild of Editors, General Secretary of Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria and the Executive Secretary, Nigerian Press Council saying it found the incident, coming against the backdrop of efforts by all, especially the media, to deepen democratic culture in all sectors of Nigeria’s national life after years of impunity occasioned by military dictatorship, as particularly worrying.

The International Press Centre (IPC) in Lagos, Nigeria also condemned the attack saying it is “reminiscent of such brutalities visited on Nigerian journalists by the military dictators”.

According to Lanre Arogundade, its Coordinator, “the attack on Akinleye came so uncomfortably close to the type viciously visited on reporters, by the military junta that rode rough shod on Nigerians, with the act being carried out in the presence of some notable public officers that did not deem it appropriate to intervene until the journalist had lost consciousness.”

IPC said it found the statement credited to the Lagos State Commissioner for Information and Strategies, Mr. Dele Alake that the attack on Akinleye was one of the hazards of the job as “alarming”.

The Centre demanded that the Nigeria Police tender apologies to Mr. Akinleye, pay him adequate compensation apart from picking his medical bill and replace all items lost by him as a result of the incident. The statement from IPC further demanded that the Nigeria Police Force caution its men on the use of force and take necessary disciplinary measures against its men responsible for the weekend assault on the photojournalist.

**Journalist Arrested Over Report**

The Port Harcourt Bureau Chief of The Source Magazine, Mr. Lawson Heyford, was on August 23, arrested in the Port Harcourt old township by plain clothed detectives.

Although no reason was given for his arrest, reports have it that Heyford’s arrest may not be unconnected with the July clash at Ataba during which some persons were killed and many houses destroyed.

Mr. Heyford, a native of Ataba in Andoni LGA of Rivers State, reportedly lost his family’s house in the ethnic clash. He reported extensively on the clash mentioning some names he alleged to be the masterminds of the conflict.

His report of the crisis was said to have angered some well-placed persons in the state who were interested in the Ataba crisis.

According to the Commissioner of Police (CP), Heyford had a criminal case to answer in connection with the Andoni problem but refused to say what role the journalist played during the crisis.

**Students Attack Radio Station, Injure Staff**

A splinter group of Nasarawa State Students Association (NASSA), on August 3 stormed the newly commissioned Precious FM in Nasarawa State and manhandled some of its staff for allegedly airing the results of a controversial election held among the body.

The attack led to the destruction of a studio including the entrance door and the windows. Two staff of the station on duty, Mallam Nasir and Donald Ikumeh were seriously injured during the assault.

The station aired an election which the group alleged was “controversial and therefore unacceptable.” But the controversial result, according to the station sources was duly signed by
Ibrahim Sabo, convention chairman, and copied to the Ministry of Education, scholarship board, State Security Service (SSS) Nigeria police and others.

Fourteen persons were elected with Suleiman bin Muhammed Odapu, emerging as the National President. The group stormed the station after the second slot was announced and forced themselves into the studio, demanding to know why the election was aired.

**Minister Demands for journalists’ CV**

Another form of subtle censorship that can be called informal repression was again introduced in Nigeria. Mallam Nasir El_Rufai, the Minister of Nigeria’s Federal Capital Territory, Abuja on August 16 directed that reporters covering the Ministry must submit copies of their curriculum vitae for vetting and effective monitoring.

The minister issued the directive through his Chief Press Secretary, Mr. Kingsley Agha. He said the new measure was aimed at keeping a tab on the reporters.

Confronted with the propriety of the directive, Mr. Agha gave a lame explanation, he said: “The minister needs to know the reporters one-on-one, to know certain things about them and give them a personal touch. He also needs to know your birthday so he can send you a card.”

**Assembly Orders Punch Correspondent Out of Akwa Ibom**

The Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly on August 15 issued a seven-day ultimatum to the management of *The Punch* Newspapers to withdraw its correspondent, Mr. Haruna Acheneje, from the state.

The letter addressed to the Editor of *The Punch* and signed by the Clerk of the House, Elder Joshua T. Joshua, said that the House took the decision to expel Haruna after he failed to heed earlier summons from the House to appear before it to explain his reasons for what it called “false and negative publishing of the activities of the House by the Newspaper”.

The letter disclosed that Hon. Dr. Etido Ikpe was the attention of the House to “negative publicity of the activities of the House by *Punch* Newspaper”.

The members were said to be particularly irked by the news report on page 6 of *The Punch* of Monday, 11 August 2003 captioned, “Lawmakers protest non-payment of allowances” written by Mr. Acheneje.

The said news report stated that members of the House walked out during the sitting of the House on August 6 to protest the non-payment of their allowances. The letter also said that the paper had earlier reported that members wanted to impeach the Speaker for not granting them leave to discuss the Local Government Bill.

The letter went on further to say that the Honourable Members debated these reports and noted: “the said publications were false, malicious and capable of inciting the people against the House and the State Government.”

It said the House then decided to summon Acheneje to appear before it on August 14 to explain his reports.

“On August 14, 2003 following the failure of Mr. Acheneje to appear before the House, the House viewed his action as irresponsible and disrespectful.

“Therefore, the House resolved as follows: That in view of the false and negative publication of the activities of the Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly by *The Punch* Newspaper correspondent, this House do advise the management of *The Punch* to withdraw Mr. Acheneje from Akwa Ibom State within seven days from the date of this resolution.”

The letter was, however, delivered to the Editor of *The Punch*, Mr. Azubuike Ishiekewene on August 20.

Mr. Acheneje disclosed that when he received the House summons on August 12, he promptly replied the next day, explaining that it was procedurally wrong to summon him since he was not the Editor. He advised the House to redirect its summons to the editor in Lagos. He
noted however that the House’s resolution was broadcast repeatedly on the state radio on August 14 in spite of his reply.

Mr. Ishiekwene, replying the letter to him also drew attention to the procedural anomaly in the routing of the letter. He told the House:

“Professionally, it is an anomaly for such document which borders on a complaint about a story published, to be addressed to the writer of the story and not the signatory of the title itself.”

Mr. Ishiekwene revealed further that he directed Acheneje to forward a letter urgently to the Honourable Speaker stating this fact so that his non-appearance will not be construed to be an act of disrespect to the House. He expressed surprise at receiving the August 15 letter and not a regularized summons. He therefore implored the House to abide by the Constitution that sets it up adding that The Punch newspapers had ordered an investigation of the complaint of the House.

In an interview with Mr. Haruna Achnenje he revealed that he has been under severe threat. He informed that following the invasion of his office by three armed men, the state Commissioner of Police, Mr. Richard Chime, on August 21, deployed some police men to provide him security. The security is being provided by men of the A and C Divisions of the state police command on rotational basis, round the clock.

He explained that all through the day while he is in the office or out in the field doing his work, two policemen from A Division, which covers the area of town where his office is located, provide him security. At close of work, the security men hand him over to two of their colleagues from C Division, which covers the part of town where he lives.

He also disclosed that the state government had intervened seeking to broker peace between him and the House of Assembly. He said the state Commissioner for Information called him on phone on August 25 to indicate that that the state government was embarrassed by the negative publicity generated by the whole matter and was willing to intervene consequent upon which he referred the commissioner to his superiors in Lagos and the leadership of the state NUJ.

The Assembly’s action elicited local and international condemnation. The Akwa Ibom State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) in a letter to the Speaker of the House dated August 22, expressed its concern over the development saying that as the professional body to which Haruna belonged, it was never contacted on the issue. It further raised alarm over the information it received to the effect that in the evening of August 21, the last day of the ultimatum, three armed men claiming to come from the House of Assembly for the purpose of effecting the Assembly order visited The Punch office in Uyo, looking for Mr. Achenje.

The NUJ in the letter called the attention of the Assembly to the negative consequences of its action and called on the House “to withdraw that order forthwith and seek redress constitutionally”.

The Guardian Correspondent Detained

Mr. Rotimi Oyekanmi the Education Correspondent of The Guardian newspapers was on August 23 detained by the police at the Iresu-Adu Police Station under the Surulere Local Council at Ogbomoso in Oyo State. He was held for six hours.

Reports have it that Oyekanmi was not only detained, but was forced by the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) of the station to write a letter of apology before his was released.

Oyekanmi was traveling to Ilorin, the Kwara State capital on August 23, to attend the 40th day Fidau of the father of his colleague, Mrs. Bukola Olatunji of Thisday newspaper when the vehicle in which they were travelling was flagged down by a stop-and-search police team, consisting of five officers and a mobile policeman, and led by an officer with the name tag “Oduyemi” at Ogbomosho.”

The policemen checked the particulars of the driver of the vehicle only to discover that the driver had no certificate of roadworthiness. He was to be taken to the police station but let
off after he pleaded with Oduyemi. But when the driver was driving away, the mobile policeman
among them again stopped the vehicle demanding to know who asked the driver to go.

Oyekanmi’s remarks that a superior officer had asked them to go only infuriated the
officer who forced the vehicle to go to the station with its passengers.

At the station, the driver was detained and ordered to lock up the car. While the
passengers were leaving to seek for another vehicle to take them to their destinations, the mobile
policeman ordered that Oyekanmi should be arrested and detained. Five policemen pounced on
him, manhandled, dragged and pushed him to the back of the counter at the station. This
encounter took place at 2 pm and Oyekanmi was detained till 8 pm when the DPO arrived the
station.

For about 45 minutes when the DPO interrogated Oyekanmi, he was not allowed to sit
because, according to the DPO, Oyekanmi was a suspect. At the end, the DPO forced Oyekanmi
to, not only apologise verbally to the mobile police officer, but also write a letter of apology.

The Guardian Chapel of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) has written to the Oyo
State Police Commissioner urging him to investigate the circumstances surrounding the illegal
detention of the journalist.

Police Assault Journalist

The police in Anambra State led by the Divisional Traffic Officer (DTO) of Obosi Division,
Mrs Justina Achike, a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) led armed people suspected
to be thugs to attack Mr Emma Nwatu, Michael Chika and Chinazo Ilechukwu, all journalists
with Minaj Systems Televisions (MST) in Obosi.

The DPO’s grouse against the journalists was the report carried on the Television on
Friday, August 15th, which X-rayed some evils going on at Nkpor Junction in the area where
she allegedly collect N100 bribe daily from each of the bus drivers that ply that road.

PEN Case List Documents Attacks On Writers and Journalists

The Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN (WiPC) has released its latest
biannual Case List of attacks against writers and journalists around the world, noting that
more than 700 attacks occurred in the first six months of 2003.

Drawn from a wide variety of sources, the report provides detailed information on
individuals who have been jailed, threatened, killed, physically assaulted or charged.

The Case List is available online at http://www.pen.org/freedom/caselist_july2003.doc or
in print. It may also be obtained from the Writers in Prison Committee, International PEN, 9/10
Charterhouse Buildings, London, EC1M 7AT, United Kingdom; E-mail: intpen@gn.apc.org.

Anyone wishing to take action on an individual mentioned in the Case List may contact
PEN American Center or the WiPC headquarters in London for updates on the case and for
advice on appeals.

Environmental Journalism Conference Holds In Cape Town

An environmental journalism conference open to journalists worldwide will be held in Cape
Town, South Africa, as part of that city’s Earth Festival, on November 20 and 21, this year.

The conference will bring environmental reporters together from across Africa and the
world to debate the latest ethical issues and challenges facing conservation or “green”
journalists.

Speakers at the conference will deliver the latest research, share case studies, participate
in panel discussions, and lead outreach tours. The primary focus of the conference will be how
journalists, especially those in the global South, can best find and publish relevant stories.
This theme will be tackled in sessions examining international trends in environmental journalism, insight into the water privatization debate, exploration of how biodiversity has become a business, and an in-depth examination of the economics of community tourism.

Senior environmental editors also will debate the place of corporate environmental reporting, as well as strategize about how to make the environment newsworthy.

The conference is aimed at working journalists, reporters, editors, communications officers, consultants and other professionals working through print, broadcast and electronic media in the environmental and sustainable development field, including companies, non-profit organizations and governmental departments.

Anyone interested in for further information should contact programme organizer Hugh Tyrrell on telephone (+27-21) 511-8108, mobile (+27-83) 253-4100, or via e-mail on tyrrell@iafrica.com.

Bookings and registration can be made to Alison Barnard on telephone (+27-21) 670-1485, fax (+27-21) 683-6488, or via e-mail on alison@africankaleidoscope.co.za.

MEDIA / PRESS FREEDOM AWARDS

Human Rights Watch Awards this Year’s Hellman/Hammett Grants

Twenty-eight writers around the world have been awarded this year’s annual Hellman/Hammett grants in recognition of their courage in the face of political persecution, by the New York based international human rights organisation, Human Rights Watch.

Nearly half of those awarded this year’s grants, including individuals in Belarus, China, Eritrea, Liberia, Nepal, Ukraine, and Vietnam, have requested anonymity for fear of further reprisals.

Named after American playwright Lillian Hellman and novelist Dashiell Hammett, the grants are given each Spring to writers who are in financial need as a result of expressing their views.

The Hellman/Hammett programme also makes small emergency grants from time to time throughout the year to writers who need urgently to leave their country, require immediate medical treatment arising from prison conditions or torture, or who find themselves in desperate financial straits as a result of political persecution.

Columbia University Announces Kurt Schork Award Winners

American freelance reporter Elizabeth Rubin and Indian journalist Asha Krishnakumar are the winners of Columbia University’s second annual Kurt Schork Awards in International Journalism.

The awards, which honour the freelance reporter killed in a military ambush in May 2000, recognise exceptional reporting that sheds new light on controversial issues, including conflicts, human-rights concerns or cross-border issues.

The awards panel honoured Rubin for her magazine reports from “some of the world’s most dangerous and misunderstood regions,” which illustrated an “ability to explain a completely different mindset in a non-judgmental and insightful manner.”

Krishnakumar, a reporter for the bi-weekly magazine “Frontline”, was recognised for her “thorough, compassionate and determined” reporting on the abuses suffered by children in India.

Freelance journalist Andrew Meldrum, who was forcibly removed from Zimbabwe in mid-May after writing several articles on that country’s economic and political crises for “The Guardian,” is one of four journalists to receive an honourable mention. The others are Sabrina Tavernise (United States), Massoud Ansari (Pakistan) and Adrian Liviu Avram (Romania).
The Washington-based International Women’s Media Foundation (IWMF) has announced a new media fellowship for international women journalists in a bid to provide the journalists with experience of working for leading media companies in the United States. Fellows will spend three months working with U.S. media companies.

IWMF co-chair, Lynn Povich, said: “The fellowship will offer international women journalists the opportunity to strengthen their journalism skills while learning first-hand about the U.S. media.

According to Povich, the organization is hoping that by building journalists’ skills and offering them the chance to work in a free press system, they also will be arming them to return to their countries to help build stronger media.

The programme is open to women journalists who have participated in any IWMF or African Women’s Media Center programme, including those who have received the IWMF’s Courage in Journalism Award. A successful applicant will be dedicated to a career in journalism, currently employed in a media organization, and show a strong commitment to sharing knowledge and skills with colleagues upon returning home. Excellent written and spoken English skills are required. Expenses, including airfare and a stipend, will be covered by the fellowship. The first fellowship will be announced in January 2004 and will run from April to June 2004. The fellowship will rotate between journalists working in the print and broadcast media, with the first year’s fellowship going to a journalist working in the print media. Applications are being accepted until November 3, 2003.

The IWMF launched in 1990 with a mission to strengthen the role of women in the news media worldwide, based on the belief that no press is truly free unless women share an equal voice. The IWMF network includes more than 1,500 women in the media from more than 130 countries.

More information and application details can be obtained from the International Women’s Media Foundation at 1726 M Street NW, Suite 1002, Washington, D.C. 20036, U.S.A. Tel.: (1-202) 496-1992. Fax: (1-202) 496-1977. Or visit the IWMF Web site at http://www.iwmf.org/programs/7666, or e-mail fellowship@iwmf.org.

Human Rights Watch Invites Applications for 2004-2005 Human Rights Fellowships

Human Rights Watch, the international human rights monitoring and advocacy organization based in the United States is inviting applications for its 2004 to 2005 fellowship programme in international human rights.

Recent graduates of law school or graduate programmes in journalism, international relations, or other relevant disciplines from any university worldwide are eligible to apply. Fellows will work full-time for one year with one or more divisions of Human Rights Watch based in New York or Washington, DC. Two out of four positions are open for applicants from around the world.

The two unrestricted fellowships are the Finberg Fellowship, established in memory of Alan Finberg, an early supporter of Human Rights Watch; and the Schell Fellowship, established in honor of Orville Schell, a founder of Human Rights Watch. The restricted fellowships are the Furman Fellowship, which is open to recent graduates of New York University School of Law; and the Sandler Fellowship, established in memory of Judge Leonard H. Sandler, a 1950 Columbia Law graduate with a lifelong commitment to civil rights and liberties, and open to recent graduates of Columbia Law School.

Fellows work full time for one year with one or more divisions of Human Rights Watch, based in New York or Washington, DC. Fellows monitor human rights developments in various
countries, conduct on-site investigations, draft reports on human rights conditions, and engage in advocacy aimed at publicizing and curtailing human rights violations.

Past fellows have conducted fact-finding missions to Albania, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Burma, Cambodia, Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hong Kong, India (including Kashmir and Punjab), Iran, Kenya, Moldova, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Russia, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Uganda, the U.S.-Mexican border, and Venezuela.

Applicants must have exceptional analytic skills, an ability to write and speak clearly, and a commitment to work in the human rights field in the future on a paid or volunteer basis.

Proficiency in one language in addition to English is strongly recommended. Familiarity with countries or regions where serious human rights violations occur is also valued. Fellows must be recent law, journalism, international relations or area studies graduates by no later than June 2004, or must provide evidence of significant, comparable, relevant work experience.

Fellowships begin in the early fall of 2004. The salary is $40,000, plus excellent employer-paid benefits.

Applicants are responsible for compiling complete application packets which must include a cover letter, resume, two letters of recommendation, at least one unedited, unpublished writing sample, and an official law or graduate school transcript. Applicants in one-year graduate programmes should supply an undergraduate transcript with a list of their graduate school courses.

Complete applications (including transcripts and recommendations) for 2004-2005 fellowships must be postmarked no later than October 1, 2003.

Completed applications should be sent to Human Rights Watch, Attention: Fellowship Committee, 350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor, New York, NY 10118-3299.

Applicants must be available for interviews in New York early to mid-December 2003. Inquiries may be directed to the Fellowships hotline at (212) 290-4700 x312, or to fellowship@hrw.org.

Reagan-Fascell Fellowships Calls for Applications

The Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellows Programme at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in Washington D.C. is accepting fellowship applications for 2004-05 programme.

The Fellows Programme was established in 2001 to enable democracy activists, practitioners, scholars, and journalists from around the world to deepen their understanding of democracy and enhance their ability to promote democratic change.

While the programme is intended primarily to support activists, practitioners, and scholars from new and aspiring democracies, distinguished scholars from the United States and other established democracies are also eligible to apply.

A working knowledge of English is an important prerequisite for participation in the programme.

Further details about the fellowships and the application booklet can be obtained from: www.ned.org/forum/R-FAplication.pdf or by contacting: fellowships@ned.org

Reuters Offers Training Course in Conflict Reporting to African Journalists

The Reuters International News Agency is offering a chance for seven African journalists to participate in a conflict reporting course in Grahamstown, South Africa, from 10-14 November. Scholarships include round trip air-fare to South Africa, full room and board, and a daily stipend for participants.

Applicants must be fluent in both written and spoken English. Training will focus on a combination of safety training and writing exercises concentrating on objective, accurate
coverage of conflict situations. Instruction in first aid, ballistics, combat zone awareness including mines and booby traps will also be included in the training programme.

The deadline for applications is October 1, 2003. More information about how to apply may be obtained from RAP21@wan.asso.fr

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**Reporting On The Information Society Awards**

The Panos Institute and Global Knowledge Partnership are inviting journalists from developing countries to apply for a new journalism prize honouring excellence in covering the impact of Internet Communication Technologies (ICTs) and the “Information Society” on the Third World.

The “Reporting on the Information Society” awards are aimed at encouraging thoughtful, incisive reporting on developing countries’ experiences with ICTs. Four awards of US$2,000 each will be given to journalists working in print, broadcasting or Internet media.

To be eligible for the prize, nominees must be citizens of, or living in, a developing country.

Nominees must submit a copy of their work that has been published or broadcast, relating to the concept of an “Information Society” in the context of their country or region. Print or Internet articles can be submitted in English, French, Spanish or Portuguese. Radio or television material in non-English languages must include a full transcript in English.

Submissions should be sent by e-mail to: award@panoslondon.org.uk or by post to: Kitty Warnock, Panos Institute, 9 White Lion St., London N1 9PD, United Kingdom.

The deadline for submissions is 15 October 2003.

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**Environmental Journalism Conference Holds in South Africa**

Sponsorship is available for a select few African journalists to attend an international environmental journalism conference to be held in Cape Town, South Africa, from November 20 to 21, 2003.

The conference will bring environmental reporters together from across Africa and the world to debate the latest ethical issues and challenges facing conservation or “green” journalists. The primary focus of the conference will be how journalists, especially those in the global South, can best find and publish relevant stories.

The cost for the conference is 1,750 South African Rand (about $250). However, a limited number of journalists will not have to pay this fee but all other costs such as travel and accommodation, must be covered by the participants.

Speakers at the conference will deliver the latest research, share case-studies, participate in panel discussions, and lead outreach tours.

The deadline for applications is October 10, 2003.

More information about how to apply may be obtained from RAP21@wan.asso.fr

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**Global News Agency Offers Fully Funded Training Course to African Journalists**

The Reuters Foundation is offering 12 African journalists the opportunity to participate in a five-day training course in Grahamstown, South Africa, on how to report international news.

The course offers practical exercises, with an emphasis on improving basic reporting skills including accuracy, impartiality, speed, clarity and structure.

The course, which will take place from November 17 to 21, will provide the 12 journalists with scholarships, including round trip air-fare to South Africa, full room and board, and a daily stipend. They will join an exclusive group of media professionals who are undertaking the training by one of the world’s top news agencies.

To be eligible, applicants must be fluent in both written and spoken English.
The deadline for applications is October 1, 2003. More information about the course and the scholarships may be obtained by contacting RAP 21@wan.asso.fr.

“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