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FOI Coalition Revs Up Campaigns Towards Passage Of FOI Bill

The Freedom of Information Coalition (FOI Coalition) in collaboration with Media Rights Agenda (MRA) has revved up campaign activities towards getting the Freedom of Information Bill (FOI) passed into law with a series of lobbying and public enlightenment activities. The Bill is expected to undergo its Third and Final Reading soon. National Assembly sources say the House of Representatives is set to resume consideration of other bills and matters having dispensed with the appropriation bill which had taken much of the attention of the Assembly since the commencement of the current legislative session. Specifically, sources say that the FOI bill is one of the bills that will receive the attention of the House soon.

In March, the FOI Coalition mounted a concerted advocacy and lobbying campaign towards ensuring passage of the bill during its expected Third Reading at the House. To this end, the Coalition recently met with some presidential aides, ministers and ministerial aides, the leadership and scores of National Assembly members and a number of some relevant committees and caucuses. The coalition had also begun a mobile text messaging campaign aimed at reaching the entire members of the National Assembly in the run up to the expected Third Reading. The overall objective of these activities is to secure their support towards securing a smooth passage of the freedom of information bill at the House.

In addition to these activities, the coalition had been engaged in an extensive public enlightenment campaign aimed at further popularizing the freedom of information bill and to firm up widespread support from a broad spectrum of the Nigerian society cutting across civil society, organized private sector and even government quarters to enable them support the passage of the bill by putting pressure on their representatives.

Public enlightenment campaign was also conducted through the production and distribution of printed materials including posters, handbills and stickers, and the production and airing of a jingle on the FOI Bill. These activities are intended to build on and sustain the current support for the enactment of the freedom of information bill from some Nigerians.

The coalition also held a roundtable meeting with representatives of the business community as a follow-up to similar meetings it recently held with editors of both print and electronic media using the
platform of the Nigeria Guild of Editors as well as another roundtable meeting with senior journalists from a number of media organizations.

In all, 15 persons representing several member-organizations of the FOI Coalition and some individual supporters of the bill undertook the advocacy visits. They include the Coordinator of the Freedom of Information Coalition, Mr. Osaro Odemwingie; the Coordinator of the International Press Centre (IPC), Mr. Lanre Arogundade, the Secretary of the Nigeria Union of Journalists, Abuja Council, Mr. Iyobosa Uwugiaren; National Coordinator of Concerned Professionals (CP), Mr. John Onyeukwu; Country Director of Global Rights, Dr. Ibrahim Jibo; his deputy, Mr. Festus Okoye; Miss. Angela Agoawike, secretary of the Nigeria Guild of Editors (NGE) and Editor, Daily Times on Saturday; and Mr. Maxwell Kadiiri of Open Society Justice Initiative.

Others who took part in the advocacy visits are: Mr. Mukelani Dimba, Training Consultant, Open Democracy Advice Centre, South Africa; and Mrs. Katarina Staronova, Deputy Director, Open Society Foundation, Slovakia; Mrs. Ibim Semenitari, Senior Assistant Editor with TELL magazine; Mr. Kabir Alabi-Garba, Media Correspondent, The Guardian newspaper; and Ms Bosede Famoroti, Media Correspondent, The Punch newspaper.

During the advocacy visits to lobby ministers, presidential and ministerial aides the teams met with the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister for Justice, Chief Akinlolu Olujimi (SAN); Special Assistant to President and Head of the Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit, Dr. Oby Ezekwesili; and Special Adviser to President on Policy and Programmes Monitoring, Professor Julius Ihonvbere.

Others the team met are: Dr. Ikechukwu, Special Assistant to the Minister for Information and National Orientation; Mr. Tunde Martins, Special Assistant to Dr. Aliyu Modibbo, who is himself a Senior Special Assistant to the President on Research and Liaison; and Mr. Bolaji Afolabi, Special Assistant to Mr. Tunde Olusunle, who is the President’s Special Assistant on Special Duties.

At the National Assembly, the team met with Honourable Pascal Adigwe, chairman of the sub-committee on the Federal Housing Authority and secretary of the South-South Caucus of the House of Representatives; Honourable Uche Maduako, a former chairman of the House Committee on Information but currently the Chairman of the House Committee on Industries; Dr. Wale Okediran; Dr. Usman Bugaje, who is the Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and Honourable Abdul Oroh, the Deputy Chairman of the House Committee on Human Rights. The FOI Coalition team also met the largest caucus in the House of Representatives, the Forum for Democracy and Good Governance, to make a presentation on the FOI Bill.

At each meeting, the team introduced the FOI Bill, focusing on its philosophy, objectives and the need for all to support its urgent passage. It noted specifically that there cannot be a meaningful anti-corruption crusade when citizens do not have a right of access to publicly held information with which they could hold officers accountable. The team also took time to address the various points of contention by opponents of the bill. These include the fear of the security implications of granting access to official records; fears that it will grant foreigners access; fears that the bill will grant the media more powers; and fear that the bill is a wholesale importation of a foreign law that does not take into cognizance Nigeria’s ‘peculiar’ situation.

The team explained that fears of security implication of granting access are unfounded because the Bill, in sections 14 to 21, contains a range of exemptions from the general right of access to information, including in cases of information which may be injurious to the conduct of international affairs and defence; trade secret or financial, commercial, scientific or technical information which may prejudice the competitive position of a government or public institution; law enforcement investigation; personal information; third party information; legal practitioner/client privilege; and course or research materials.

At each meeting, the team ended by requesting the officer to support the passage of the bill and depending on the position and schedule of the public officer, the team also made some other additional request. For instance, the team asked Dr. Ezekwesili to convene a meeting between representatives of the Coalition, her self and some other presidential aides to provide an opportunity to address some of the contentious areas of the bill and agree on the way forward as well as consider some specific collaborative
activities that the Coalition could undertake with her office to further the push for the passage of the bill at the National Assembly and secure presidential assent.

At the Ministry of Justice, the team requested collaboration with it to organize a workshop on the theme: The Role of Freedom of Information Act in the Administration of Justice. The team said this would further broaden the views of Nigerians on the relevance of a freedom of information regime.

The minister thanked the coalition for the visit and the purpose. He confessed that he had the impression that the freedom of information bill was a new bill before the House and did not know it had been pending since the tenure of the last assembly. Although the minister in his response appeared to hold the view that the FOI Bill is a media bill and passing it into law will further give the media more power, the team explained to him that the bill is meant to provide access for all persons including the media. The team noted for instance that an FOI regime will put an end to speculative reporting in the media and strengthen journalism practice by making correct information readily available to journalists.

Having listened to the team, the minister promised to take a look at the bill and when necessary invite the coalition for further discussion. He also promised to consider the request for collaboration.

Dr. Ezekwesili thanked the team for the initiative of reaching out to all shades of opinion on the issue of an FOI Act in Nigeria. She re-stated her commitment to transparency and accountability and the effort to institutionalize this process through appropriate legal regime and therefore promised to work towards the realization of the objective of the coalition. She similarly revealed that efforts were already on at the Presidency to harmonize the views of officers at that level on the bill. Specifically, she revealed that the State House Counsel was already working at harmonizing the positions of the Presidency staff on the bill. She added that as soon as this is completed, the presidency hope to convene a mini-stakeholder meeting with representatives of the FOI Coalition and some other interest groups to address the contentious areas.

She, however, suggested that the lobbying effort should be conducted in such a way as to relate it to the realization of government policies. For instance, she said efforts should be made to examine how a Freedom of Information regime could impact on and assist the economic reform programmes of the government. That way, she believes that it would be easier for those in authority to buy into it.

At the meeting with members of the Forum for Good Governance and Democracy, the chair of the meeting Hon. (Dr.) Usman Bagaje, thanked the FOI Coalition for the efforts that it has put up so far in pushing for the passage of the bill. He remarked that the Forum had no doubt that an environment of Freedom of Information would provide a huge impetus for the entrenchment of democracy and development. These he said are the driving principles of the Forum.

He attributed the development experienced in Ghanaian and Mauritanian economy and politics to openness and accountability and then gave a commitment on behalf of the Forum that they would all vote in support of the bill whenever it is scheduled for the Third Reading.

In his contribution, Senator Wada commended the coalition for its commitment and added that: “the question of lobbying for passage of a bill is customary and proper.” He noted that what the coalition was doing is exactly what is expected of any pressure group to do in relation to any bill either sponsored by it or it is particularly affected by it in a democracy and made a commitment that “whenever the bill comes to the Senate, we will do our best possible to see how to support the bill”. Elaborating on the gains of the proposed bill when it becomes an act, Senator Wada asserted that good governance is the ultimate for any government that is worth its salt. He added: “And we all know the ingredients of good governance. That is government by the rule, accountability, transparency and participatory in terms of government administration”.

He affirmed that “it is not going to be a tall order to us in the senate to do this (pass the bill)”, but he assured that the present Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria “is very sensitive and favourably disposed to issues that will really enhance the lives of Nigerians and produce what is called good governance in this country.” Senator Wada pledged to facilitate the coalition’s interaction with the Senate Committee on Information as well as Senate leadership to stimulate a better understanding of the issues raised in the bill.

The visit to the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Information was informed by the need to begin to build bridges at the upper legislative chambers in anticipation of the expected passage by the House when it undertakes the third reading of the bill. The FOI Coalition plans to get the Senate Committee on Information to sponsor the bill at the Senate upon its being passed at the House. To this
end, the FOI Coalition is making arrangements to meet with the leadership of the House during the week of April 26 to 30. The purpose of the meeting is to strategize on the modus of the Third Reading to ensure that the bill is passed without any hitch.

In addition to these advocacy visitations, the FOI Coalition in collaboration with Media Rights Agenda produced and distributed campaign materials targeted at Legislatures, members of the Executive as well as members of the public. These include posters, handbills and stickers. The materials were aimed at promoting the philosophy of a freedom of information regime and highlight the advantages derivable by different sectors of the society. They also produced a number of memos and other briefing documents on the freedom of information issue. All these were circulated to many individuals and groups across the country using mainly the network of member organizations of the freedom of information coalition.

The FOI Coalition also organized a Business Roundtable on the Freedom of Information Bill in Lagos. Over twenty persons representing bilateral chambers of commerce, banks, manufacturers associations, publishing, legal and medical professions and the media attended it. Eke Ubiji, the Executive Secretary of the Nigeria Association of Small and Medium Enterprises, chaired the meeting. Mr. Tive Denedo, the Campaigns Director of Media Rights Agenda made a welcome remark while Mr. Osaro Odemwingie, the Coordinator of the Freedom of Information Coalition presented a paper entitled: FOI: Improving Governance, Strengthening Business.

Participants noted that some of the benefits a freedom of information regime would have on business transactions included improved fiscal management through establishment of institutions, processes and control mechanisms arising from free flow of information, optimal resource allocation through clearly articulated public policy that are available for scrutiny and the projects implementation watch which shall be made possible through availability of records from executing agencies and departments.

They noted further that it would be futile to fight corruption as planned by President Obasanjo if a law that guarantees free access to public information held by government agencies is not enacted. They also accepted that transparency and accountability couldn’t be a way of life in a country where even harmless information is kept away from the public. On the suggestion to establish a structure to supervise a loose coalition of a Business Network for the Freedom of Information, participants said that the Coalition’s Secretariat should supervise all categories and sub categories of members. This they said would ensure that information is made available from a single source.

Many of the participants especially the chambers of commerce and the association of manufacturers pledged to host officials of the Coalition before the end of the month to make presentations to both the executive councils of the associations as well as corporate members. Participants also said they would provide enlightenment support by speaking to other businesspersons who will use their clout to reach out to members of the National Assembly.

There was clearly a show of enthusiasm on the part of the participants to contribute to the FOI advocacy. The presence of the three foremost membership based business organizations like Nigeria Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA), the Nigeria Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (NASME), and the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry, ensured that a huge and influential segment of the business community has been formally introduced into the FOI Coalition.

Media Rights Agenda and the FOI Coalition also disseminated jingles on the FOI Bill on seven radio stations across the country. This was one station more than the proposed six stations. There were two types of jingles, one in pidgin and the other in English. The jingles aimed to explain the philosophy and advantages of an FOI regime to the country and implore members of the public to support its passage by putting pressure to bear on their representatives at the National Assembly to pass the bill at the earliest possible opportunity.

There were 30 jingle placements in each of the eight radio stations across the geo-political zones of the country. Starting on February 27, the jingles ran through March 13, at a rate of three insertions in the morning hours on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays.

The FOI Coalition also issued sub-grants to three member-organizations of the coalition to undertake step down training on Transparency and Accountability in various parts of the country where they are based. The coalition subsequently used the opportunity of the preceding Training of Trainers’
workshop in Lagos and subsequent step-down trainings in Jos, Plateau state, Aba, Abia state, and Lagos to further enlighten members of the public on the FOI Bill and seek their support for its passage.

During the period under review, the FOI Coalition also undertook a number of visitations to media establishments meeting members of editorial boards, editors and senior journalists and making presentations on the FOI Bill and urging them to support its passage and give it editorial focus. The result was several news, features article, commentaries and documentaries on the bill in the print media as well as the electronic media.

**NBC Axes Programmes, Alleges Breach Of Broadcasting Code**

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) on March 30 axed some broadcast programmes which it alleged breached the NBC Code. It banned live re-transmission of foreign news and news magazine programmes by local free-to-air (terrestrial) stations in the country with effect from April 1. In the same vein, stations that air “unverifiable” claims in their religious broadcast were also given till April 30 to cease airing them or face NBC sanction. Dr. Yisa also accused some stations of defaulting to renew their licence and so were, technically speaking, broadcasting illegally. He added that broadcast licences and their renewal were done on regional basis.

The director-general of the commission, Dr. Silas Yisa Addressing newsmen in Abuja, said the action was in line with the provisions of the National Broadcasting Commission’s Act.38 of 1992, as amended.

Dr. Yisa said: “In keeping with the mandate of monitoring and regulating the Nigerian airwaves, the National Broadcasting Commission has put a stop to the relay of news and news magazine broadcast from foreign stations by Nigerian terrestrial stations. The order takes effect from Thursday, April 1st 2004. This is no April Fool.”

He added that the directive became necessary, because, “apart from the perspectives they convey, it is a professional aberration for a station to relay live any news content that it has no editorial control over.” He said further that: “There was also the danger that these broadcasts pose to our national interest.”

The ban, he clarified, does not affect “the universal practice of monitoring news and rewriting them or those of programme exchange entailing a pre-recorded programme edited to suit the Nigerian audience”.

On religious broadcast, the commission’s helmsman said issue of miracles on television and radio had become a worrisome development to the NBC. He added that NBC was concerned about the persistent issue of unverifiable claims. This, he said contravenes Section 4.4.6 of the NBC Code which states that: “Religious broadcasts shall be particular in terms of content to its creed, and shall not be presented in a manner to mislead the public.” He also cited Section 8.6.1 of the Code which says: “An advertisements promoting religion in any form shall present its claims, especially those relating to miracles, in such a manner that it is provable and believable.”

Dr. Yisa disclosed that the NBC had met with stakeholders and was therefore issuing the final deadline. He gave stations airing “these programmes that profess indiscriminate miracles as events of daily fingertip occurrence” till April 30 to cease broadcasting them or risk the Commission’s sanction including withdrawal of licence.

Renewal of licences by stations was another issue that the NBC helmsman spoke about. Dr. Yisa disclosed that by the provisions of the NBC Code, it should be every five years. He expressed disappointment that despite reminders and invitation for interviews some stations refused to respond and are now ‘technically’ speaking, operating illegally. He named such stations to include Bayelsa State Radio and TV Service; Jigawa State Broadcasting Corporation, Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State; West Midlands Communications, Ibadan and Nigeria-American Trading Company, Jos. Dr. Yisa also gave them till April 30 to pay their licence renewal fees or lose the licences.

On live retransmission of foreign news and news magazine programmes, Chapter 3.3.1 of the NBC Code says “… a licensee shall be responsible for the content of the station’s broadcast”, while Chapter 5.1.4 says: “A terrestrial station shall not relay foreign news content directly”. Stations that broadcasting live news and news magazine programmes breach these provisions because they do not have editorial control over the programmes and so may not want to take responsibilities for whatever
may arise as a result of the contents of news programmes, be it libel or copyright issue, while in another breath the Code explicitly prohibits it.

For religious broadcasts, it is debatable whether the miracles that are broadcast are not verifiable. At least from the way they are presented to the public, the claims to miracles are verified, going by what the clerics and those that claim to have received miracles present unless the Commission has contrary evidence. People who are allegedly miraculously healed usually, at least on television, present certificates from hospitals that they were afflicted by a sickness or disease before some of the preachers would even attend to them. Some other clerics demonstrate their claim of healing by calling out people who are either related to or live close to the beneficiaries of the miracles to testify that they were actually afflicted prior to their healings. NBC did not say it had any evidence to contradict evidence presented by these clerics of professed miracles.

The fallout of the ban on miracles in religious broadcast will be the loss of revenue by private stations which depend solely on revenues from adverts and sponsored programmes. These religious broadcasts usually have a substantial time dedicated to testimonies of miracles. The ban on religious programmes with “unverifiable” miracles people claim to have received will therefore substantially cut down on revenues accruing to them.

For licence fees renewal, there is disparity between what private and government-owned stations pay. Fees charged private stations are very high do not reflect the NBC published schedule of licence fees for the various categories. The schedule does not differentiate between government and private stations. The fees are also based on three categories into which all the states of the Federation, including the Federal Capital Territory falls. These categories are simply designated A, B, and C, not regions.

The NBC claim that licence fees are given based on regions is not reflected in its schedule of fees making the playing field uneven for the players. Government stations also receive subventions and compete with private stations for advert revenue, yet they pay substantially less renewal fees than private stations.

Several Nigerians have reacted to these bans by the Commission. While some have commended some of the bans others have condemned them.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Alhaji Aminu Bello Masari queried the NBC directive banning live broadcast of foreign news and news magazine programmes. Masari’s query, it was gathered arose from pressure from the northern elite, who complained about the ban which affected the Hausa service of the British Broadcasting Corporation, transmitted live by some radio stations in the country and which is very popular among them.

Dr. Yisa’s reply to the query was however, like the reason for the ban …. He said it “was in the best interest of the country”, adding that stations which had been relaying such programmes breached the codes governing their operations.

Similarly, the Director of Social Communications, Lagos Catholic Archdiocese, Reverend Fr. Gabriel Osu, called for an immediate reversal in the interest of Nigerian masses. Fr. Osu noted that the ban would mainly affect the poor masses who do not have access to, nor can procure cables or satellite dishes to access news on global happenings. He said, the ban was contrary to trends in the modern age of information dissemination. He also expressed disappointment at the manner in which the ban was pronounced, saying it was tantamount to censorship.

Mr. Richard Akinnola, Chairman of Centre for Free Speech (CFS) also described the order as an act of censorship and infringement on the rights of Nigerians to information as contained in Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR). He asked the Commission to withdraw the ban on foreign news programmes.

Several listeners to retransmission of BBC programmes in Kano who spoke to the Daily Trust newspapers correspondent in the city also stoutly condemned the ban on these programmes.

The Lagos State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) in its reaction asked the NBC to first make public the offences already committed by these stations to merit the ban. It said for the NBC to come out spotless in its test of transparency and objectivity in service, it owes the public explanation, as the failure of the commission to make public the deficiencies of local stations would have justified the position held on this matter by the northern elite, who alleged that the commission was out to serve political interests of some people.
The NUJ concluded by saying that emphasis have been made that every local broadcast station must have editorial control over its news content and analysis, either foreign or local.

Again, the question of the NBC as an impartial regulator and standard setter of the broadcast industry in Nigeria is called to question. From its operations, it is clear the NBC regulates and sets standards for only private stations while government stations operate according to the dictates of the executive, at the State and Federal levels, in clear defiance of the NBC Code. Section 6.3.1 of NBC code says: “In Nigeria the coverage of sporting and other major national events shall not be exclusive to any station. Such programme shall be made available to other operators on mutually negotiated terms” Programme exclusivity shall be discouraged, but where exclusive rights have been acquired, such programme shall be readily made available to other operators in mutually negotiated terms.” It also makes the NBC the final arbiter whose decision shall be binding in the event of a disagreement in negotiation. Section 6.3.4. also says “the Commission shall ensure that the costs are fair and equitable.”

Two recent cases confirm this assertion. In October 2003, Nigeria hosted the All African Games christened COJA 2003. The Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) had the exclusive host broadcaster’s right to broadcast the events in Nigeria. Again, in January, Tunisia hosted the Nokia sponsored African Cup of Nations. OSMI, a private firm secured the broadcast rights to beam its signals in Nigeria which it ceded to NTA.

In both cases, NTA gave private independent and states stations very stringent and uneconomical conditions if they were to broadcast signals of the events from it. The conditions include among others exclusive list of reserved sectors of non competing sponsorship categories. In other words, independent broadcasters were not to source advert from these categories. On the list were: GSM Telecoms; Alcohol Beverage and Carbonated and Energy Drink; Money Transfer and Financial Services; Mobile Telephone equipment; Motor Vehicles; and Electrical Household Goods.

The NBC which sat and mediated when modalities for transmission of signals of the Korea/Japan 2003 FIFA World Cup matches were drawn did not deem it fit to intervene in the case of COJA 2003 and Tunisia 2004.

These were not the only times NTA would be giving unfavourable economic conditions to stations that wanted to retransmit signals of events for which they claim exclusive broadcast right. It had precedents of even barring stations from transmitting signals of national and international events claiming to be the exclusive broadcasters, in breach of Section 6.3.1 of the NBC Code which prohibits exclusivity of such broadcasts. On several occasions in the past it had harassed private stations and barred them from transmitting signals of both National and international events.

TV Africa which clinched the broadcast rights to Korea/Japan 2003 agreed among other conditions that: each broadcaster would be required to keep TV Africa’s pre-sold advertising and sponsorship packages within the broadcast and use at least nine minutes per game to air their adverts. Stations hooking up to TV Africa were also required to carry TV Africa and FIFA’s logos as well as those of six sponsoring firms signed on by TV Africa. The stations also had, in addition to the nine minutes, additional minutes to advertise during half time as well as break and injury times.

There were no exclusive categories from which other stations were barred from taking adverts.

Two organisations: the Centre for free Speech and the Centre for Religious and Cultural Rights (CRCR) have given the NBC different ultimatums to rescind the decision banning these broadcast or they go to court. The CFS gave it seven days while the CRCR gave it a 21 day-ultimatum.

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War In Iraq Exacted A Huge Toll On Journalists In 2003 - Surveys

Three press freedom groups: the International Press Institute (IPI), the World Association of Newspapers (WAN) and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), in their annual reports released in March are in agreement that the war in Iraq exacted a huge toll on journalists in 2003. While IPI recorded as many as 19 journalists getting killed in the line of duty in Iraq, WAN recorded 15 and CPJ 13.

The IPI said in its 2003 World Press Freedom Review, a survey of press freedom in 184 countries and territories, that journalists reporting the war paid a heavy price, with 19 killed in Iraq last year. It added that the high number of deaths reinforces the media’s need to confront safety issues and the need for the military to review its relations with journalists and noting that: “A number of deaths might have been avoided if combat soldiers had been given the same information as their superiors regarding the whereabouts of journalists.”

Elsewhere in the rest of the world, the report said another 45 journalists lost their lives in 2003. Breaking down the number, it said Asia led all regions with 19 deaths, seven of them in the Philippines; in the Americas, 17 journalists were killed, nine of them in Colombia while to its surprise, only two journalists were killed in Africa.
WAN in its own annual report of journalists killed worldwide said fifty-three journalists and other media workers were killed because of their professional activities, with 15 of them killed in the Iraq war and its aftermath. The report named three countries as accounting for more than half of the deaths and constituting the most dangerous countries for journalists. These are Iraq 15, the Philippines seven, and Colombia six.

“In addition to correspondents covering the Iraq war, journalists who investigated organised crime, drug trafficking and political corruption were also at high risk, and many of the murders appear to be retributive attacks,” said Kajsa Törnroth, Director of Press Freedom Programmes for the Paris-based WAN. “In many cases, the killers act with impunity — most of these cases remain unsolved.”

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), in its year 2003 report, said 36 journalists were killed and 136 imprisoned for doing their jobs.

Several press freedom organisations monitor the media milieu and track the number of journalists killed each year. The numbers vary based on the criteria used by the different associations. WAN’s figures include all media workers killed in the line of duty or targeted because of their work as well as cases where the motive for the killings is unsure or where investigations have not been completed.

Create Framework for Access to Accurate and Reliable Information, Workshop Urges Government

Participants at a workshop have called on the Nigerian government to put in place a framework that will give the media access to accurate and reliable information as it observed that various factors, among them lack of access to information and ownership/control and structure of media houses, inhibit journalists in the management of conflicts in Nigeria.

The occasion was a two–day Stake-holders’ Workshop on ‘‘Conflict Management and the Media in Nigeria’’ organized by the Centre for Research and Documentation, Kano. The workshop was held at the Dayspring Hotel, Abuja, from 9th – 12th February with participants drawn from the media, the academia, civil society organizations, policy making bodies and the general public.

The participants at the workshop also observed that most foreign news reports about Nigeria are on conflicts and they are often not well researched leading sometimes to the escalation of conflicts. Unfortunately, the workshop said censorship, especially censorship of government media, has led to a lack of credibility of the Nigerian media system, with the result that most Nigerians depend on the “unreliable” foreign media channels for credible news.

The participants also noted that Nigerian media, rather than striving to manage conflicts, only react to them and more often than not escalate them in collaboration with some other entities.

Other factors the participants observed militate against proper management of conflicts by journalists include poor remuneration/conditions of service which they said affect journalists in the way they discharge their responsibilities; that there is no proper understanding between media professionalism and national interest; and that it is difficult to communicate unbiased and value-free information in a plural society like Nigeria.

Participants also said the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC), the Nigerian Press Council (NPC) and the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), are unable on their part to discharge their responsibilities when called upon to do so.

The workshop participants, based on the observations above, made several recommendations which include: framework for the guarantee of media access to information in consonance with democratic principles; review of the remuneration and the conditions of service of journalists and other media practitioners; recognition of other sources that can escalate conflicts including the email, the internet, telephone, and other informal channels. They called on government to put in place a mechanism to monitor them.

They also called for a broad strategy aimed at encouraging media professionalism that will be anchored on unbiased, objective, reliable and responsible reporting.

They further recommended the need for the major stakeholders, e.g., the Centre for Research and Document (CRD), the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (The Presidency), the National War
College, Abuja, and the Federal Ministry Information and National Orientation, to put together a national
conference on Media Practice and the National Interest.

They urged government to always publish and accept for implementation, recommendations of
public proceedings and reports of panels and commissions of inquiry.

They called on the media to be proactive by communicating and projecting core values for peace
building and development in Nigeria. These core values, they said, comprise, among others, tolerance, social
responsibility, transparency, unity, respect for the rule of law, responsible citizenship, accountability and good
governance. They also recommended that Journalism and Mass Communication training agencies/institutions
should include the study of conflicts, management and resolution in their curricula.

IFJ Congress To Harmonise Journalism

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has scheduled its World Congress to hold in Athens,
Greece between May 25 and 30. Discussions at the Congress will be focused mainly on how to build
solidarity in journalism.

In line with the theme of journalism in a time of turbulence and momentous change, this year the
Congress will debate major issues, including globalisation and its impact on work. Other issues as the
quality of media, union rights, safety, human rights and the global campaign for protection of journalists
are also billed to be addressed.

Diversity and public service values, the continuing struggle for quality and editorial
independence in media, and gender issues will round out the list.

FOI Coalition Holds Advocacy Training Workshop

The campaign for the passage of the freedom of information Act in Nigeria got a shot in the arm in
March when the Freedom of Information Coalition (FOIC) held a training workshop for representatives of some member organizations and individuals who have been involved in the advocacy
for the passage of the bill.

Tagged: Advocacy Training Workshop, the event was organized in collaboration with Media
Rights Agenda (MRA) with support from the Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI).

The workshop ran from March 16 through 19 and had as its primary purpose the improvement of
the capacity of civil society organizations to engage the legislative process to ensure that the Freedom of
Information Bill, which is currently pending before the House of Representatives, is passed by both
Houses of the National Assembly in the shortest time possible and as well receive presidential assent.

The workshop started with a welcome dinner for participants on March 16. The process of
starting the participants on what turned out to be simple but effective procedures for creative lobbying
and advocacy began at the dinner. Osaro Odemwingie, Coordinator of the Freedom of Information
Coalition, Nigeria, took participants through the rough but educative and instructive process of
mobilizing for the campaign for the passage of the freedom of information act in Nigeria. He spoke on
the subject: Campaign for FOI in Nigeria to date: Successes and Challenges. This was followed by a
presentation on Law-making in Nigeria: Institutions & Practices by Mr. Maxwell Kadiri of Open Society
Justice Initiative (OSJI) as well as Understanding the Concept of Advocacy by Chidi Anselm Odinkalu
also of OSJI.

Mr. Mukelani Dimba from Open Democracy Advice Centre, South Africa; and Mrs. Katarina
Staronova from Open Society Foundation, Slovakia, Eastern Europe, also gave insight into the process
that they went through seeking the passage of freedom of information acts in both countries. Mrs.
Staronova and Mr. Dimba spoke on Campaigning for Freedom of Information: Lessons from Eastern
Europe and South Africa respectively.

Dimba revealed that it took five years before the bill could sail through in South Africa. On the
other end of the spectrum, Mrs. Staronova revealed that it took six months to be passed in Slovakia.

The choice of Mr. Dimba and Mrs. Staronova as facilitators was because they have been part of a
similar struggle in their own countries and elsewhere that led to the enactment of FOI Acts.
Beginning from March 17, the bulk of the job at the workshop was coordinated by the trio of Mr. Dimba, Mrs. Staronova and Ms. Joan Bird, an expert in lobbying and communications from Green Bird Associates, London.

Throughout the training, participants engaged in re-assessment exercises on the advocacy activities they had applied far and fashioned out new strategies in order to accomplish their goals. At the end participants went away with bags full of new skills and technical know-how on expanding the frontiers of supporters for the bill. This was aided by the interactive approach adopted by the facilitators which made the entire exercise interesting.

The participants were drawn from civil society organisations, print and electronic media representing groups such as Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE), faith groups as well as labour movements and other professional groups.

In all, the training programme featured eight practical sessions during which different constituencies of people were identified and peculiar messages and strategies were designed for each. While the training was going on, contacts were also being made to seek audience with key members of the National Assembly as well as Federal Executive Cabinet to give practical teeth to skills that were newly acquired. The result was a meeting on March 18 with the Chairman, Senate Committee on Information and National Orientation, Senator Tamar Wada and another with the Minister for Justice and Attorney General of the federation Chief Olujimi (SAN).

Indeed, the visits were fruitful as Senator Wada expressed the willingness of the lawmakers at the upper legislative chamber to ensure that the bill sees the light of the day while the minister promised to study the bill and make input towards supporting its passage besides another promise to collaborate with the coalition in whatever way feasible.

At the end of the training exercise, Mr. Edetaen Ojo, Executive Director, Media Rights Agenda, on behalf of the Coalition, thanked the facilitators for the experiences and knowledge that they so selflessly shared and the participants for the unwavering enthusiasm they exhibited throughout the duration of the four days exercise which ensured that such a huge volume of work was accomplished.

He pledged the commitment of Media Rights Agenda and FOI Coalition in organizing more of such training sessions to expand the base of beneficiaries and lobbyists of freedom of information until the bill is passed and beyond because “it is one thing to pass a bill, the implementation is another thing.”

The advocacy training workshop, coming at the time and point that it did was a huge compliment to the series of intense lobbying activities of the Coalition in the first quarter of the year. It gave participants first hand knowledge of lobbying skills to enable them undertake some lobbying activities in their various areas of operation to ensure the passage of the Freedom of Information Bill.

The Freedom of Information Bill is at present before the National Assembly. It was introduced in 1999 shortly after the inauguration of the previous assembly. It underwent the First and Second Readings as well undergone the committee scrutiny. Efforts are now concentrated at ensuring that the House of Representatives adopt the bill at its Third Reading.

**NIJ Reawakens From Hibernation To Another Tribulation**

Nigeria’s foremost professional journalism training institute, the Nigerian Institute of Journalism (NIJ) Ogba, Lagos, which has just woken up from its more than three and a half years’ hibernation is again faced with another simmering crisis: possible litigation by the Institution’s students.

NIJ which reopened to its students and the public on March 22 was immediately hit by another crisis which threatens to close it indefinitely again if not properly handled. The current crisis followed a directive by the provost, Dr. (Mrs) Elizabeth Ikem, that the students union had been dissolved and that each students would have to pay between N50,000 and N60,000.00 as school fees depending on their programme.

Prior its accreditation, regular students of the Institute, depending on their programmes, paid between N10,000.00 and N25,000.00 per session.
Further, the Provost announced that all National Diploma and Higher Diploma students who had outstanding final examinations to write would commence the examinations barely three weeks after resumption on April 13 without taking lectures and in addition, they would not benefit from the newly acquired National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) approval.

Infuriated by the “arbitrary” increase in school fees imposed on them and other requirements, the students began to protest. They gave the NIJ management a seven-day ultimatum within which to rescind the unfavourable decisions.

In a letter dated March 24 addressed to the chairman of the Institution’s governing council, Mr. Festus Keyamo, lawyer for the students, warned that another round of crises looms at the institution if the decisions were not revoked. He threatened to drag NIJ to court if the institution’s management goes ahead to implement the decisions.

The NIJ was closed down June 2000 following students’ agitation for its accreditation and disruption of lectures. The NBTE finally accredited it as a monotechnic in December 2003. Besides having standard facilities, other conditions given to it by NBTE before accreditation were a N100 million bank guarantee and a fifty-hectare site.

Investigative Journalism Necessary And Feasible In Nigeria,
Obstacles Notwithstanding

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articipants at two training workshops on investigative reporting for Nigerian journalists which took place in March say investigative journalism is necessary and feasible in Nigeria in spite of the obstacles that confront journalists in the terrain. The trainings which held in Abuja at Chelsea Hotel from March 22 to 23 and in Lagos at Westown Inn from 25 to 26 was organized by Freedom House, an international human rights organisation based in New York, USA and Media Rights Agenda.

The workshops focused on investigative reporting for junior to mid-level print and broadcast journalists in Nigeria to sharpen their investigative reporting skills. Mr. Roderick Macdonell, a consultant with the World Bank Institute facilitated the workshops while Mr. Edetaen Ojo, the Executive Director of Media Rights Agenda made presentations on the relevance of the Freedom of Information Law on Investigative Journalism. In all, 42 journalists were invited to the two workshops but 36 attended.

The workshops were interactive and included discussions, case studies, and practical fieldwork designed to strengthen journalists’ ability to produce quality investigative pieces, presentations, video clips of case studies, question and answer, as well as interview simulations.

The workshop in Abuja had a total of 16 participants drawn from various media houses, both print and electronics, from across the nation while the Lagos version had 20 participants drawn from different media houses, both print and electronics, based in Lagos.

Topics treated at the workshops included: Definition of Investigative Journalism; Constraints on doing Investigative Journalism; Using Public Documents; Executing an Investigative Report (case study); and Access to Information/Information Flow. Other topics are Legal Concerns-Making it Bullet proof; Safety and Security in Investigative Journalism; Interviewing; and Ethics in Investigative Journalism.

In defining what Investigative Journalism is, participants began by giving their understanding of the terms before the facilitator, Mr. Macdonell came out with definitions by journalism/mass communication authors.

Participants variously described investigative journalism as: an attempt to unravel a mystery; digging deep (beyond the ordinary eye can see); attempt to research into a matter for the purpose of getting fact (truth); that it is not just an academic exercise but a venture embarked upon because there is a problem to be solved.

Definition by communications experts given by Roderick included that of the US-based Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR) which defines it as the pursuit of hidden stories about the individuals and institutions that shape our lives. It adds: “These are hard stories, hard to assemble and hard to tell.”

Another definition given was that by William Gaines which suggests that a practical way to approach this type of in-depth journalism is to utilize the familiar five Ws and H – who, what, where, when, why and how. He says further that investigative reporting produces a story that would not have
been revealed without the enterprise of the reporter; provides the reader with a story of public importance that had to be pieced together from diverse and often obscure sources; reveals a story that may be contrary to the version advanced by government or business officials who might have tried to conceal or distort the truth; and results in a story that usually is displayed prominently in a newspaper or leads the nightly television newscast.

John Ullmann’s definition in his book Investigative Reporting: Advanced Methods and Techniques says: “there are still some … who assert that all reporting is investigative reporting”. In other words every reporter investigates what he/she writes about. His assertion finds some accord in Lucinda Fleeson’s definition in her book Ten Steps to Investigative Reporting where she states that: “reporters in developing countries and emerging democracies face obstacles that are higher, deeper, and more impenetrable than any faced by the average American reporter. In many ways, everything these reporters do is investigative reporting.” She listed some of the obstacles these journalists face to include absence of access to information legislation, inadequate legal protection, inadequate staff and the daily pressure to produce copies.

The workshops also established that investigative journalism stirs the conscience of people who ordinarily will want the matter covered up; that the selling point is public interest/good; that it is a journalism of outrage, outrage at abuse and exploitation by the powerful.

The facilitator pointed out that investigative reporting requires the efforts of an enterprising reporter and can be time-consuming, risky and requires hard work. But these seeming obstacles do not mean that journalists should not embark on it.

Facilitator and participants acknowledged that there are constraints to undertaking investigative journalism. They listed the following as some of the constraints to investigative reporting in Nigeria. They include: policy of secrecy in governments at all levels, poor funding, poor or inexistent records at public institutions, threats to life and job, lack of moral support, personal/political interests and interference from publishers. Participants however also agreed that in spite of these constraints, investigative journalism is possible and went ahead to list ways out of the constraints. Some of the solutions to the constraints listed by the journalists include legal framework for free access to information, public enlightenment, legal protection, enhanced security, comprehensive insurance and training and retraining.

The workshop also revealed the importance of public documents in investigative reporting. Mr. Macdonell reminded participants that the three ways of obtaining information are through documents, interviews and observation. He said public documents which are official records prepared for a formal purpose are very important in investigative reporting because they serve to support the stories through which the reporter informs and educate the public. They are known as primary documents and serve as brick for investigative stories. Secondary sources serve as the mortar to hold the bricks together. Public documents prove assertions made in investigative stories, giving them credibility and iron-cast proof. Others which are important to an investigative piece like letters to friends, interviews, etc can be used as critical evidence when supported with explanation from a reliable source. They constitute secondary source and are the mortar that holds the bricks together.

Participants watched a video clip titled The Paper trail that reconstructed in brief, the efforts and testimonies of nine Philippine women journalists, members of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) who, through their investigative work dug out materials with which they showed that Joseph Estrada, ex President of the Philippines was corrupt and involved in receiving grafts. Their reports brought down Estrada’s government and led to the installation of Gloria Arroyo in his stead.

Participants were also reminded to make their investigative stories ‘bullet-proof’ to guide against libel suits that can close down their media. One of the ways of doing this is what Macdonell called the “line by line editing”. By this method, the editor and the reporter sit and go through the story together line by line, paragraph by paragraph, verifying and getting documents as proofs of assertions made in the story and where need be, going back to cross-check other aspects and also ascertaining that sources are credible. The availability of supporting public documents is one of the ways of making investigative stories bullet-proof. He stressed that the method is cumbersome but is a necessary “stitch in time”.

Mr. Edetaen Ojo in his presentation, took participants on a brief tour of Nigerian laws that affect the practice of journalism and specifically those that hinder investigative journalism in Nigeria. Participants discovered to their amazement that Nigerian government at all levels operate a secrecy
policy in the disclosure of officially held information in Ministries, Parastatals and Public Institutions. Various laws restrict both the civil servant and the information seeker from embarking on seeking or giving information make it an offence to either seek or receive information. These laws include the Official Secret Act (1963) the Penal Code of Northern Nigeria; and the Criminal Code of Southern Nigeria. This secrecy policy entrenched in the nation’s laws makes it imperative for a freedom of access to information legislation in Nigeria in order to loosen this strangle hold on information and strengthen the nation’s democracy through transparency and accountability.

He also briefed participants on the provisions of the Freedom of Information Bill, being championed by Media Rights Agenda but which has been taken over by the Freedom of Information Coalition, currently before the House of Representatives. He enlightened participants on the processes that led to its drafting, the efforts MRA has and is making to get the bill passed into law and the challenges on its path. Participants, through his briefing discovered the importance of the bill and especially to their work. They were however made to be aware that the bill is not essentially a media bill though if passed, would significantly enhance the work of journalists. Mr. Ojo revealed that research showed that the business community makes use of and benefits most from an access to information law.

Mr. Ojo’s presentation on government deliberate secrecy policy backed by law and odyssey of the Freedom of Information Bill brought home the significance of a Freedom /access to information law and they made suggestions and commitments towards getting the bill passed into law. These include: the need to intensify and widen the campaign for a freedom of information law; better enlightenment for journalists; collaboration and networking with journalism and human rights organisations; and lobbying of the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and other political parties.

Thereafter, Mr. Macdonell gave the international perspective of the freedom/access to information law

For the field work, participants were split into groups with each group agreeing on a possible news story issue to investigate as well as a back up issue. Members of the groups shared tasks and agreed on where to go for the information and documents they needed, who to interview. They were asked to make sure they got official documents that will reveal information that will inform and educate their reading publics. The issues agreed to by groups were noted and participants were thereafter given five and a half hours to investigate their agreed issues.

On return, Mr. Macdonell debriefed each group while every other participant made comments and contributions on efforts and findings pointing out the strength and weakness of the documents the groups were able or unable to get.

The workshops generally agreed that investigative journalism can be risky and can lead to battery, injury, deformity, and even loss of life. They also discussed some safety and security measures to be observed when investigating any issue which, if those concerned get to know can make them seek to harm journalists involved. The point was also made that some journalists who were battered, maimed or murdered could have escaped if they had been a little bit more careful and observed certain basic safety measures. Safety, participants were told, is part of getting the job done, participants were told that proper planning reduces risks.

The realization of the potential risks to journalists on investigative stories led the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to develop and publish a nine-page set of directives to guide its staff.

The BBC advised, among other things, that there must be a thorough assessment of all the risks involved in the project, counseling as well that “proper planning and precaution will reduce the risk to all involved and must be considered at each stage (of the project.” To achieve these, the BBC advised that it is wise to work up a profile of members in choosing a team; that where possible, local knowledge should be used in order to be able to use the right language, phrase, and behaviours; that trouble must be anticipated and the team prepare ways of escape; measures of personal security ensured. Other safety advice include: keeping information about the intended programme secure by involving only a few people; treating information on a need to know basis and counseling staff not to reveal the details of their work; and possibly giving the programme or department a false name.

A very important advice was also given to journalists doing investigative stories The advice is that if he determines that an investigative project is inherently too dangerous, he should not do it. That, though is a license not to do investigative stories at all.
The interview simulation session followed a brief lecture on the dos and don’ts of interviewing. Roderick listed and explained several factors which should be taken into consideration when conducting an interview. Journalists should not ask close ended questions, not posing several questions in one sentence as it makes the interviewee avoid some questions and answer only those he thinks are easy and suit his purpose. Journalists were also told to anticipate hostility especially when an interviewee has a secret to hide. Such people could parry questions, threaten journalists in veiled forms, taking control of the interview etc.

After the interview simulations, participants made comments on the strength and weakness of the interviewers and suggested ways of going about some problems that may arise while conducting an interview.

Methods used in getting information for investigative works also oftentimes raise questions of ethics and morals. Participants were enjoined to weigh their choices especially against the provisions of the law, the policy of the media house, the peculiar position of the journalist etc.

At both workshops, participants were impressed at the quality of the training, the training materials and the method of the training that they asked for follow-up training. They also promised to keep in touch with Mr. Macdonell.

WPFC Calls On Governments To Defend Free Flow Of Information

The World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC) has called on governments to ensure there will be neither controls over content, nor modifications of the Internet’s technical “architecture” in such a way as to facilitate or permit censorship of news or editorial opinion as the world prepares for the second World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS II). It said they should explicitly commit themselves to “respect and to implement Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to the fundamental principles of press freedom”.

These were the crux of a position paper presented by WPFC on March 10 on internet governance: the management and administration of the Internet, an issue, it said, had become central in preparations for the WSIS II scheduled for Tunis, Tunisia, in November 2005.

WPFC disclosed that the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has been mandated to direct a study incorporating the views of diverse interests to be produced in time for WSIS II and civil society caucuses are already exchanging message traffic on how to determine their positions. Many of these groups, it noted, have histories favoring content controls. It emphasized however that: “Any proposals that threaten press freedom on the Internet, whatever the source, should be rejected.”

WPFC pointed out that it was clear at WSIS I that there was a general feeling among member-states, including US allies in the European Union, that “Internet governance” should not be the exclusive preserve of the California-based Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN).

ICANN, a company under contract to the US Commerce Department has allocated Internet domain names on a neutral, technical basis and has included industry, NGOs and international representation in its governing board and committees.

WPFC observed that governments which want to turn Internet governance over to an international body, presumably in the UN system, want to go beyond technical matters to deal with content questions, like pornography, pedophilia, fraud, hate speech, etc. ICANN does not in any way interfere with the content of the Internet. The Council of Europe’s Cybercrime Convention points the way governments seem to be headed. The United States signed that Convention, but it has a separate protocol on hate speech that was designed to give the United States the option not to sign onto an element that would clearly violate the US Constitution’s First Amendment.

It revealed that under the US-accepted compromise of a two-year UN study to submit recommendations to WSIS II, a process has begun that will probably produce a UN proposal for modifications of the Internet governance system.

It demanded that: “A role for ICANN should be preserved as part of any new system that may emerge under UN auspices. Supporters of a free and open Internet should be able, with the backing of allies like the UN Department of Information and Communications and the UNESCO Secretariat, to resist any changes that threaten the free flow of information and ideas on the Internet.”

It warned that “Governance” [of the Internet] must not be allowed to become a code word for government regulation of Internet content while pointing out that the intergovernmental debates of over
two years preparatory to the WSIS I amply demonstrated that authoritarian governments, which already censor their own Internet traffic, seek content controls internationally and/or legitimization of such controls nationally. Again, it cautioned, the system must not be reorganized to permit this on an international level or encourage it at the national level.

It stated that the Internet’s growth, popularity and integrity are based on its content not being regulated by governments or international organizations.

WPFC said, bearing in mind that the Declaration adopted December 12, 2003, at the World Summit in Geneva provided that “freedom of the press and freedom of information . . . are essential to the Information Society,” it suggested the following principles should guide any changes in the Internet governance system:

There should be no controls over content, nor modifications of the Internet’s technical “architecture” that facilitate or permit censorship of news or editorial opinion. Nor should “self-regulation” be allowed to become a surrogate for governmental regulation of content on the Internet.

The system should explicitly commit itself to respect and to implement Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to the fundamental principle of press freedom. National or international security concerns must not be allowed to limit freedom of expression, including news and editorial comment, in cyberspace.

Considerations of “ethics” should not be allowed to become a veiled approach to introducing or allowing censorship.

There are many forms of communication over the Internet, and it is important not to confuse them. News, for example, is different from such things as pornography, pedophilia, fraud, conspiracy for terrorism, incitement to violence, hate speech, etc., although there may be news stories about such problems. Such matters are normally covered in existing national general legislation and should, if appropriate and necessary, be prosecuted on the national level in the country of origin.

Any legal actions that may arise should be adjudicated in the jurisdiction where a disputed message first originated, or in a single jurisdiction agreed upon by the parties to any given dispute.

WPFC re-emphasized that the Internet being a major opportunity to improve exchanges of information and ideas throughout the world, nothing should be allowed to restrict this powerful new medium for better communications among people.

CODERSRIA To Hold Conference On Electronic Publishing And Dissemination

Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) in recognition of the considerable changes and innovations in the creation, management, publishing and dissemination of knowledge the Information and communication technologies have brought has planned a conference from the 1st to 2nd of September in Dakar, Senegal. It will look into the impact of information and communication technologies on electronic publishing and dissemination.

The conference has three main objectives which are to enable: an exchange of experiences between participants in the field of digitization and electronic publishing of scientific documents (journals, theses and dissertations among others); a reflection and a better awareness of challenges and stakes posed by information and communication technologies; and a better use of these technologies in documentation centres, libraries, archives and in the field of research.

The specific objectives are: on-line catalogues; digital collections; electronic publishing of documentary products; digitization of scientific documents; and electronic dissemination of scientific documents.

Expected participants at the conference include information and communication professionals (archivists, librarians, documentalists, among others); information and communication technologies professionals; electronic publishing professionals; and researchers, experts, publishers, distributors, consultants and all those working in electronic publishing and who have a particular interest in information and communication technologies.

The conference will be organised in sessions where communications on various topics and case studies will be presented. English and French will be the working languages for the conference.
The list of topics to be treated includes but is not restricted to: access to electronic resources; online data bases; electronic publishing of journals; electronic submission of theses and dissertations; digital libraries; archiving and preservation of digital collections; and electronic publishing and copyrights.

Other topics are electronic publishing and standardization; digital divide; the role of information professionals in the digital age; and sharing of electronic resources.

At the end of the conference, CODESRIA hopes the participants will have contributed to the advancement of the scientific reflection on the challenges of information and communication technologies for documentation centres, libraries, archives units, publishers among others. In addition, the conference will have enabled fruitful exchanges of ideas and experiences among participants. It is also anticipated to serve as an opportunity for setting up a network of social sciences resources.

CODESRIA therefore invites all those interested in the conference to submit an abstract of their paper not later than May 30, to it. Authors of accepted abstracts will be informed not later than June 15. They should submit their papers no later than July 31, 2004.

All abstracts and papers are to be sent by post, email or fax to Mr Abou Moussa Ndongo, CODESRIA Documentation and Information Centre, B.P.: 3304 - Dakar, Senegal. Tel: +221 - 825 98 22/23 - Fax: +221 - 824 12 89, E-mail: abou.ndongo@codesria.sn; amndongo@hotmail.com or aboumndongo@yahoo.fr.

CODESRIA will cover participation costs (travel and stay) for authors of accepted papers. After the conference the papers will be published in a book form.

OSCE Appoints New Representative On Freedom Of The Media

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) last month appointed Hungarian writer and former parliamentarian Miklos Haraszti as its new Representative on Freedom of the Media.

In a letter announcing Haraszti’s appointment for a period of three years, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy said: “I am very pleased with this decision and look forward to our future collaboration. I wish you every success in the new job.”

Haraszti’s task as the Representative on Freedom of the Media is to monitor press-freedom conditions in OSCE’s 55 participating countries, which include Europe, Central Asia, the United States and Canada and, in close co-ordination with the Chairman-in-Office, to advocate and promote full compliance with OSCE principles and commitments in respect of freedom of expression and free media. His predecessor was Freimut Duve of Germany who held the position from January 1998 until December 2003 as the OSCE’s first Representative.

Haraszti, born on 2 January 1945 in Jerusalem, was one of the founders of the Hungarian Democratic Opposition Movement in 1976 and edited an underground magazine, Beszelo, during the 1980s. He has written several books and taught media politics and democratisation at several universities. He was a member of the Hungarian parliament from 1990 to 1994.

African Conflict Reporters Form Network

Journalists from 11 African countries, last January, formed a new network to share information and resources and provide training for conflict reporters. Based in Burundi, the network arose from a conflict-reporting conference held there by the Ijambo Studio, Panos Institute of Paris and the Intergovernmental Agency of la Francophonie.

Forty-one other journalists have joined the network as members. Membership of the Network gives them access to a database of conflict reporters in Africa and training manuals for covering conflict issues, including demobilization, justice and reconciliation processes and the role of women in peace-building. Future activities, pending funding, will include trauma support for reporters and training opportunities such as fellowships and field assignments.

The Network is currently seeking donors to fund a continent-wide survey of conflict reporting in Africa and the media’s impact on peace processes. The survey also hopes to evaluate the work conditions and support mechanisms available for conflict reporters in the region.

It is being coordinated by Cyprien Ndikumana who can be reached on ndikumanac@yahoo.fr.
New Group to Boost Free Speech in Eastern Europe

The newly created International Media Lawyers’ Association, comprising of media lawyers from across Eastern Europe at a meeting in Belgrade in March has joined forces in a bid to advance free speech in the region. The Association will target restrictive media laws and promote freedom of expression. It will pool information and nurture the professionalism of the region’s growing network of media lawyers.

“This new forum is a big step forward for free speech defenders. Despite a decade of reform, media freedom is still undermined by bad laws and practices throughout the region,” said Alexander Kashumov, a member of the Association’s newly elected board, adding: “The Association will give a boost to strategic reform.”

Members of the Association have agreed to share legal knowledge and practices tried and tested in local and regional courts, to help train a new generation of media lawyers and bring to the region the best and latest media law policies.

Several countries of Eastern Europe continue to suffer free expression through threats of criminal prosecutions, high libel damages, financial censorship and denied access to information.

The International Media Lawyers’ Association was founded following meetings of media lawyers in Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro in March and Tbilisi, Georgia in February. It is open to media lawyers from across Europe and internationally. Founding members include media lawyers and activists from South Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus, Russia and Ukraine, as well as from the U.S. and the U.K.

Many graduated recently from a summer school on media law at Oxford University, co-organised by the Justice Initiative and the Oxford Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy.

Justifying support for the project, Helen Darbishire of the Justice Initiative said: “Journalists often come under attack when they challenge government wrongdoing and corruption. Media lawyers need to be familiar with international standards to defend the role of these public watchdogs.” The Justice Initiative, jointly with the Stanhope Centre on Communications Law and Policy, the Belgrade Media Center and Georgia’s Liberty Institute helped organize the founding meetings.

Council Of Europe Convention On Cybercrime Enters Into Force

The Council of Europe’s Convention on Cybercrime will enter into force following its ratification last month by the 5th country, Lithuania. The Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Walter Schwimmer, welcomed this important step in the international fight against cybercrime, and has encouraged more countries to ratify the agreement.

The convention, the first international treaty on crimes committed via the internet and other computer networks, is the result of four years’ work by experts from the 45-member Council of Europe and from non-member countries including the USA, Canada and Japan.

The main aim of the convention, which focuses in particular on child pornography, computer-related fraud and violations of network security, is to develop a common criminal policy on cybercrime by promoting international co-operation and the adoption of appropriate legislation.

Secretary General said: “The Convention on Cybercrime is a ground-breaking agreement which will play a key role in fighting computer-related crime. Cybercrime is a major global challenge which requires a co-ordinated international response – I therefore urge all of those Council of Europe member states which have not yet signed or ratified the convention to do so as a matter of priority.”

The Council of Europe is planning a major international conference on “The Challenge of Cybercrime”, which will bring together senior politicians, computer industry leaders and experts from around the world in Strasbourg from 15 to 17 September.

Group Calls On Nigeria To Ratify The AU Convention
Independent Advocacy Project (IAP), the good governance group has called on the Nigerian government to seize the opportunity presented by the meeting of African Heads of State in Syrte, Libya to ratify and put in place structures that would allow for effective implementation of the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption which was adopted last year July. African Heads of government converged in Libya from February 27 to 28.

The IAP said, in a statement released in Lagos that signing and ratifying the Convention will complement Nigeria’s efforts under the Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) which is part of the monitoring process of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). And Nigeria has voluntarily submitted itself to be reviewed under the APRM.

It argued that non ratification of the Convention may adversely affect the voluntary governance review as the domestication of the Convention is a key governance indicator within the APRM process. Besides, the Convention contains useful provisions on Access to Information, Political Party Financing, Repatriation of Stolen Assets and Money Laundering; which are essential elements in the fight against corruption.

According to the good governance group, “Incorporating the AU Convention into Nigerian laws will assist Nigeria in its renewed fight against the notorious Advance Fee Fraud and other economic crimes which have in recent years tarnished the country’s image. This is especially important at this time when Nigerians seem to be taking seriously efforts of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission.

Nigeria is among the 21 African countries that have signed but are yet to ratify the AU Convention, which requires 15 ratifications to come into force.

IPI Congress To Beam Search-light On Eastern Europe

The International Press Institute (IPI) will convene in Warsaw for its 2004 World Congress and 53rd General Assembly from May 16 beaming its searchlight on countries of Eastern Europe. This is coming fifteen years after the fall of communism, and just two weeks after Poland and nine other countries formally join the European Union (EU).

Poland’s President Kwasniewski is expected to speak at the opening ceremony on the opening day. Other confirmed speakers include Prime Minister Leszek Miller, Adam Michnik (former dissident and editor-in-chief of the first independent Polish daily, Gazeta Wyborcza, and Santiago Canton, Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Sessions will analyze the changes in Eastern Europe since 1989: the current situation, the role of the Polish media as a watchdog against corruption, and press freedom violations in the countries of the former Soviet Union.

Experts will examine why intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), many of which have charters or constitutions upholding press freedom, have failed to censure member states that breach their media freedom commitments. A key discussion item will be: What can IGOs do to enforce compliance, and what role can NGOs play?

Other sessions will deal with “Implementing Good Journalistic Practices,” as well as “The Manifold Problems of Media Concentration” and “Globalisation and Trans-border Investment by Media Companies.”

Some 500 editors, media executives, and leading journalists are expected to attend.

Commonwealth Human Rights Network (CHRN) Established

The Commonwealth Human Rights Network (CHRN), a new initiative aimed at enhancing the work of civil society groups working for human rights in Commonwealth countries has been established. It will provide a forum for: articulating and pursuing a broad common human rights theme for the Commonwealth; sharing of information and collaboration between the diverse groups; combined advocacy efforts, for instance regarding monitoring of commitments made by the Commonwealth and member countries; and capacity building to increase use of the Commonwealth as a forum for human rights advocacy.
CHRN activities include: Facilitating advocacy in the Commonwealth: by informing members of upcoming Commonwealth events and opportunities for advocacy, and providing background material in order to assist in such advocacy; Experience sharing and facilitating collaboration: this is primarily web-based including a database of members, resources, information about the Commonwealth and human rights, and regular email updates; Monitoring human rights commitments: between CHOGMs the Network will monitor action of Commonwealth governments in fulfilling their human rights promises; Capacity-building for human rights advocacy in the Commonwealth: as requested and as funds allow, workshops may be held to increase organisations’ capacity for advocacy in the Commonwealth; and Commonwealth Human Rights Forum: this meeting will be held immediately prior to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) to bring together members from across the Commonwealth and to ensure the prominence of human rights concerns at CHOGM.

The CHRN is a joint NGO initiative being established by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), the Association of Commonwealth Amnesty International Sections (ACAIS) and the Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit (CPSU). The Secretariat is based at CHRI’s headquarters in India.

The first meeting of the CHRN was held at the Commonwealth Human Rights Forum, organised by CHRI, Legal Resources Consortium and Nigerian Human Rights Commission (and supported by CIDA, Commonwealth Foundation and British Council), prior to the Nigeria CHOGM in December 2003. The communiqué of this meeting can be found at: http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/advocacy/chogm/chrfnew.htm.

IFEX General Meeting To Enhance Members’ Skills

The International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) will hold its next General Meeting from 13-18 June 2004 in Baku, Azerbaijan. The Meeting will have two sessions, a skills building workshop on the first day and the General Meeting holding the remaining days.

The first day of the programme, 13 June, will be devoted to workshops to enhance the skills of representatives of members organizations in fundraising, monitoring and project management. The skills-sharing seminars have been planned to be highly interactive and enable participants to share their experiences and expertise. Leading experts in the free-expression field will also be invited to give presentations.

The main IFEX General Meeting which will take place From 14-18 June, will see participants attending panel sessions and seminars concerning: The most pressing free-expression issues facing the world today; New obstacles facing groups in developing countries; Creative strategies for strengthening free expression locally and globally; Ways of improving and strengthening regional and international networks; and New ways of gaining local and international profile and support.

Don McKinnon Urges Civil Societies To Consolidate CHOGM Gains

Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon has urged Commonwealth civil society groups to consolidate their gains at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Abuja, Nigeria, in December 2003.

Speaking at the opening of a one-day Commonwealth Civil Society Consultation at Marlborough House in London, UK, on March 17, the Secretary-General said civil society groups should identify areas where they can further push their agendas.

Welcoming representatives of civil society organisations from developing countries, Mr McKinnon said: “Civil society groups are actively emerging in developing countries, and this is important and they deserve all your support as they do often have a much harder role to play than civil society groups in developed countries.”

The Secretary-General encouraged the 50 participants from the UK and abroad to collaborate in their efforts to improve the impact of the Commonwealth in the world.

Commonwealth Foundation Director Colin Ball said: “It is useful to reflect on how the world has changed and the way the official and unofficial Commonwealth have come together, and take into
account the quantitative and qualitative changes along the way. Let us see how we can develop a synergy to move things forward.”

**ATTACKS ON THE PRESS IN MARCH 2004**

**Journalists barred From Effectively Covering Council Polls**

Members of the Kogi State Correspondent Chapel of the Nigerian Union of Journalists were tacitly barred from covering the March 27 Local Government Council polls in the state. The Kogi State Independent Electoral Commission refused to give accreditation to the correspondents of some media houses in the State while all journalists from local media were duly issued theirs.

The non-accreditation opened them to possible assault and battery by security men and political thugs during the elections.

**Journalist Battered, Equipment Damaged**

Mr. Joseph Nafoh, a correspondent of the African Independent Television (AIT) in Rivers State was on March 27, beaten up by armed thugs while covering the local government elections.

The incident took place at about 2.00p.m in Ward 1, at St. Pius X college, Bodo-city community in Gokana Local Government Area, the hinterland of Ogoniland in Rivers State.

A source at AIT Port Harcourt office confirmed reports that the incident took place when the correspondent was observing and reporting on the elections. The report added that the assailants seized and damaged his video camera. He was saved from lynching by the timely intervention of policemen though they made no attempt to arrest the attackers.

The seized camera was returned to the offices of the television station on March 29, by the state commissioner for Information, Mr. Magnus Abey. He however did not return the cassette.

**Editor Alleges Threat From Ekiti State Government**

The Managing Editor of *TheNews* Magazine, Mr. Babafemi Ojudu alleged that the Ekiti State government has been threatening to deal with him. He said on March 30, between 9 and 10 p.m, he received three anonymous calls on his mobile phone.

The three calls, he said, given their different voices, were made by two individuals whose identities and numbers were masked. Mr. Ojudu said they accused him of masterminding the cover story of *TheNews* magazine’s April 5, 2004 (Vol. 22 No. 13) edition titled: “The Power Drunk Governor: How Fayose’s Men Murdered Students”.

He added that the callers told him: “It is because you want to be the governor of Ekiti state that you are writing rubbish. You will never be governor,” and threatened “We will deal with you”.

The editor also alleged that earlier the same March 30, between 4 and 6p.m., a man who called himself Stephen Akinyemi and who claimed to have worked for Wale Thompson, the musician, called thrice from London with the number + 442078911411. The said Akinyemi, according Ojudu, warned him to “desist from criticizing Governor Fayose”. He said he called back the number, the phone rang but there was no response.

These threatening calls tallied with what Mr. Idowu Adelusi, the Chief Press Secretary to Governor Fayose, said at a press conference in Ado-Ekiti on 31 March and which was reported by some national dailies. He alleged that Mr. Adelusi, at the press conference said: “By all standards, the media was supposed to be an unbiased watchdog of both the society and the government. But in the case of *The News* magazine, it is no longer playing that role because of its determination in sponsoring one of its editors for the race into the office of governor in 2007.”

The Ekiti State Government in its reaction however debunked Mr. Ojudu’s claims. In a statement by Mr. Idowu Adelusi, the government said that after a thorough investigation into the matter, it discovered that the claim by Mr. Ojudu was false and a mere attempt to raise unnecessary alarm.

The statement added that the aide Ojudu was referring to was a long-time associate of his who had implored Ojudu to join hands with Governor Fayose in developing the state.
The discussion between Ojudu and the governor’s aide, the statement insists, was never meant to threaten him noting that if the aide had intention of harming Ojudu, he would have called him on a line, which he is not familiar with.

MEDIA/PRESS FREEDOM AWARDS

The ASNE International Journalism Exchange Calls For Applications

The ASNE International Journalism Exchange, an annual professional program for foreign editors sponsored by the American Society of Newspaper Editors and administered by the International Center for Journalists is currently inviting applications from eligible applicants for the 2004 edition of the programme.

Through this program, ten newsroom managers of daily newspapers are invited to the United States for a five-week program, the core of which is four weeks at a U.S. newspaper. The visiting editors have an opportunity to observe all aspects of producing a U.S. daily, and are invited to exchange ideas and information with the host newsroom staff and community.

The goals of this program are to strengthen the independent press overseas and to enhance U.S. understanding of other cultures and journalism around the world. Writing and reporting are not objectives of the program.

The ideal applicant to apply is an editor-in-chief or deputy editor-in-chief with at least five years of newspaper experience. Current employment at a daily newspaper or news service is a determining criterion though exceptions are considered on an individual basis.

Applicant must submit a complete application form with two issues of his/her newspaper and once chosen, participants must comply with the Agreement to Program Conditions. He/she is to write a 300-word essay describing what he/she wants to learn during the programme. The applicant should explain why participating in the program would be useful to his/her news organization.

Applicant must be interviewed by a native English-speaker who fills out the English Evaluation Form.

The ASNE/IJE exchange programme is fully funded. It provides round-trip international airfare, all domestic program-related travel, emergency medical insurance, Washington and New York hotel accommodations and a stipend for meals and incidental expenses. The sponsors also provide lodging in Washington and New York, and housing for the four-week newspaper assignment, mostly in home stays with a newspaper professional. Other than travel and living expenses, the program does not pay any salary or honorarium.

Full details of the programme and application forms are available from International Journalism Exchange (IJE), International Center for Journalists, 1616 H St. NW, 3rd Floor, Washington, DC 20006, United States of America, Tel: +1-202-737-3700; Fax: +1-202-737-0530, E-mail: ije@icfj.org, Website: http://www.icfj.org

Completed applications are expected to be returned by June 1 and applicants will be notified of the results in July.

NNMA calls For Entries for Its 2004 Award

The Nigerian Media Merit Award has called for entries from qualified applicants for the media works done in the year 2003. Open to all men and women practicing journalism in Nigeria, the award carries a trophy, a certificate and a specific cash prize for the various categories.

Entries are expected from three major categories namely Print, Radio and Television.

Among criteria for assessment in the print medium are: factuality, accuracy, originality, language (conciseness and simplicity) coherence, clarity, balance and objectivity, human interest, freshness of ideas, creativity, and caption ability for press photograph.

For the Electronic Media, (radio and television) the following criteria would apply: Knowledge of the subject matter, depth, confidence, appeal to positive emotion, eye and body communication, social responsibility. Ability to generate and hold interest, touch of the dramatic courage, breaking of new
Some of the formats specified by award organizers for entries include the following: five original copies of the works undertaken in year 2003, with proof of publication or broadcast; each entry to be accompanied with the curriculum vitae and two passport size photographs of the author; entries to specify the award category the work is presented for and should not exceed two for any particular category; entries with joint authorship to be submitted jointly by the authors, not one of them; and entries for the Print journalist of the year must be at least 4 major works in each quarter spread over the year of assessment and should cover different disciplines.

Entries are expected to reach the NMMA administrators on or before May 15. Further information on the award can be obtained from The chairman, NNMA Award Nominating Panel, C/o 281, Gbagada Expressway, Gbagada- Lagos. P. O. Box 6728, Ikeja.

University of Westminster Announces Government Leadership Course

The Global Economic Policy Institute at the University of Westminster has announced the launch of the world’s first international ‘how to reform a government’ course for senior figures.

The one-year MA Economic and Governmental Reform course is a unique Masters programme designed to prepare senior civil servants and rising political figures for leadership roles in government. The course includes a forensic examination of why reforms go well or go badly, and examines closely the conflicts that often arise between different types of economic & governmental reform, and within different types of government structures.

The programme design is based on extensive worldwide research among government leaders and international financial institutions. Course modules include security & military reform, macroeconomics, political & legal system reform and international law, for example. A central module concerns public administration and finance reforms, with a particular focus on the administration of health and education policy.

A fundamental assumption behind the course is that much international military conflict and most incidences of mass poverty can be prevented by more effective governance. An associated assumption is that the conduct of government at the top of policymaking is vital in this endeavour – ‘good governance begins at the top’.

The Global Economic Policy Institute has conducted extensive work with governments in Sub-Saharan Africa. In 2003 alone in-country work has included Nigeria, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Kenya and Mali.

A wide range of Sub-Saharan African countries were included in the worldwide research that formed part of the course design. This included the Presidencies or Prime Ministerial offices or party leaderships of Ghana, Mozambique, Uganda, Malawi, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Rwanda, Namibia, as well as the countries above.

For further information and course fees, contact: Paul E M Reynolds (Director) Mobile/cellular +44 7974 188087, Direct office landline +44 20 7255 2558, Out-of-hours +44 20 8741 1166 or +44 20 8748 6788 E mails paulreynolds@paulreynolds.plus.com or paulreynolds@westminster.ac.uk

The Global Economic Policy Institute, provides courses for senior civil servants from around the globe, in collaboration with the University of Westminster, and undertakes research and advisory projects for governments and for international aid institutions the world over. Country operations in 2003 include China, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Kenya and Iraq, and work for the World Bank and UN institutions.

HURISIA Invites Applications For 10th Human Rights Camp

The Human Rights Institute of South Africa (HURISA) is inviting applications from NGOs and governmental institutions in Africa for participation in its tenth annual African Human Rights Camp to be held in South Africa from Monday 27 September to Friday 15 October.

The African Human Rights Camp (AHRC) is a three-week long intensive training course in human rights, designed for people working in the field of human rights education in Africa. It is held annually.

The maximum number of participants is limited to 32 and priority will be given to applicants who are currently involved in human rights education and advocacy in Africa. Applicant’s professional and working experience, as well as future work plans will be considered during selection. Regional and gender representation will also be taken into account. Applicants must be able to communicate in written
and spoken English. Applicants representing NGOs who have not participated in past African Human Rights Camps will be given priority and only one application per organisation will be considered.

The objectives of the programme are: to increase the knowledge of participants of basic human rights concepts; to discuss the practical implementation of human rights in different environments; to facilitate the exchange of experiences in the field of human rights training and education; to develop a pool of resource people (trainers) who can articulate and teach human rights in their own countries and regions; to provide a forum for the sharing of information concerning country-specific human rights situations; and to further promote human rights networking in Africa.

Some of the topics that would be treated at the camp include: Philosophical and historical basis of human rights;

Universality and cultural relativity of human rights; International and regional systems for the protection and promotion of human rights; International Criminal Court; Economic, social and cultural rights; The rights of children, women and refugees; and NGOs and human rights networking in Africa.

The other topics are; HIV/AIDS in Africa; Ethnic, racial and religious discrimination;

Human rights documentation and information handling; Teaching human rights; Organising human rights training courses; Fundraising; and Impact of religious and cultural practices on human rights.

Sessions will be led by resource persons with experience and expertise, gathered through their work in non-governmental and inter-governmental organisations, and in academe. The course will employ a combination of lectures, workshops, group discussions, role plays, reading sessions and film shows.

Completed applications must reach HURISA on or before June 18. The Course Secretariat reserves the right to extend the deadline. The list of successful participants will be announced on June 25 and only successful applicants will be notified.

Participants will be given a set of basic human rights reading materials upon registration and summaries of lectures at the beginning of each session. Most of the course materials will be in English. Participants will be required to prepare a paper to be delivered at the Camp.

The course fee of 250 US dollars is compulsory and covers tuition, materials and lectures and non-refundable.

Participants are expected to raise funds to cover their own transportation, accommodation and meals expenses. Accommodation and Meals for the three weeks cost 1,500 US dollars.

Limited funds are however available to cover either the costs of international flights or the costs of accommodation and meals during the course. Requests for any financial assistance must be made in writing, on behalf of the applicant, by the head of an organisation to the AHRC 2004 Course Secretariat (c/o HURISA). Subsidies will be granted on merit and at the discretion of the organisers.

Participants who have attended all the course activities will be awarded a certificate of attendance. Exceptions will only be made where a valid reason for missing a session is submitted by the participant and accepted by the Course Secretariat.

Call For applications For Women PeaceMakers Program

The Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice is currently accepting applicants for its 2004 Women PeaceMakers Program designed for leaders who want to document, share, and build upon their unique peacemaking stories.

Selected peacemakers will receive roundtrip airfare, housing, and a small stipend to cover expenses for the eight-week residence (September 25-November 19, 2004) in San Diego, California.

Women from anywhere in the world who have assumed a leadership role in peace and conflict resolution with an emphasis in human rights in their own society or in the global community are invited to apply. Assistant writers and a film assistant will help each peacemaker document her unique peacemaking experience.

Application can be obtained online from http://peace.sandiego.edu or by e-mail from slyford@sandiego.edu and submitted not later than May 28.

Reuters Announces Dates For Two Pan-African Journalism Courses

The Reuters Foundation has announced the dates for two courses for African journalists which it added to its 2004 schedule: one on conflict reporting and the other on writing international news.
The programmes are scheduled for November 15 to December 3 at the Rhodes University School of Journalism in Grahamstown, South Africa.

The course on reporting in conflict zones is a practical training course with rudimentary lessons in first aid, ballistics, and combat zone awareness, including training in mine and booby-trap detection which offers African journalists the chance to hone both their survival and journalistic skills.

The international news course, which is less physically intense, will coach journalists on newswriting according to the standards of Reuters and other global news organizations. It is designed to improve basic reporting skills, including accuracy, impartiality, speed, writing style and clarity.

Prospective applicants must have at least two years professional experience, be regular contributors to print, broadcast or online media organizations, and be residents of African countries in the midst of economic or political transition.

Reuters will select a group of 12 African journalists to attend both courses.


“Implicit in freedom of expression is the public’s right to open access to information and to know what governments are doing on their behalf, without which truth would languish and people’s participation in government would remain fragmented.”

Joint Declaration of the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the OSCE Representation on Freedom of the Media, and the OAS Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression.

[26 November 1999]