



Accra Declaration 2024

We, the media stakeholders gathered in Accra, Ghana, for the African Media Convention held during the period May 15-17, 2024, under the theme "*The African Media We Want: Enhancing Freedom, Innovation, and Environmental Sustainability in a Dynamic World*," **recognize** the critical role of the media as essential in fostering democracy, promoting innovation, and advocating environmental sustainability.

We adopt the theme of the Convention, which highlights the imperative of safeguarding fundamental rights such as those set in international labor standards, freedom of expression, media freedom, access to information, and the safety of journalists, fostering innovation in the African media landscape, and recognizing the role of the media in promoting environmental sustainability.

We acknowledge that the media is indispensable for Africa's sustainable and peaceful development, and that it has tremendous potential to shape public discourse, uphold freedom of expression and the right of the public to be informed, remove barriers for socially vulnerable and marginalized groups including persons with disabilities, and hold duty bearers to account, foster innovation, and advocate for environmental conservation and sustainability.

We acknowledge and align with the May 3, 2024, joint declaration by the African Commission on Human and People's Rights Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information and other stakeholders on the climate crisis and freedom of expression.

We reckon the global theme of this year's World Press Freedom Day dedication by UNESCO to the importance of freedom of expression, media development, and journalism in the context of the current global environmental crisis.

We acknowledge the countries that have made strides in ensuring freedom of expression, access to information, and the safety of journalists.

We further acknowledge the hostile environment faced by journalists in Africa and emphasize the urgent need for intervention to ensure their safety and protect their rights by creating a safer environment, allowing journalists to report freely without fear of threats, harassment, or violence.

Recalling the AMC 2023 Lusaka Declaration which endorsed the continued organization of the African Media Convention as an annual event in commemoration of the WPF and to be hosted by media stakeholders in an African location on a rotational basis, in partnership with UNESCO, the African Union, its bodies and RECS as co-hosts, we also empower the Steering Committee of the Africa Media Convention to deliberate on the submitted bids for the hosting of the Africa Media Convention 2025 in line with the set tradition that recognizes the need to foster inclusivity.

Reaffirm the Lusaka recommendation of the annual assessment of the status of press freedom, access to information, and safety of journalists in AU member states and welcome the African Union as a partner in this activity. To provide sufficient time for the implementation of the recommendations, we support the amendment of the annual assessment to a biennial assessment.

We also acknowledge the importance of providing structure for the growth of the Africa Media Convention and reiterate the Lusaka Declaration that requested the Steering Committee of nine members to establish follow-up mechanisms for the implementation of this and past

recommendations on press freedom, media development, access to information and safety of journalists on the African continent.

We acknowledge that African media have an important role to play in the successful and people-centered implementation of the Agenda 2063 vision of a united, peaceful, and prosperous Africa, driven by African citizens, and to make Africa a significant player in global affairs.

We note the need for the media in Africa to strengthen partnerships and synergy with civil society organizations, United Nations country teams, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), Africa Information Commissioners to mainstream safety of journalists (SoJ), freedom of expression (FoE) and access to information (ATI) in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), APRM Voluntary Self-Assessments and the AU African Governance report.

Noting that Africa is embracing AI as a revolutionary and very disruptive technology, there is a need to ensure the integrity of information and sustain trust in the use of AI-based systems and platforms, responsible and ethical use of AI, which should also cover media and information literacy that stimulate critical thinking, lifelong learning, global citizenship, diversity, equality and inclusion, freedom and autonomy and cultural competencies.

Areas of Concern

1. We remain concerned by the **continued killings and jailing of journalists and media professionals** for undertaking their work and the proliferation of impunity for these crimes against journalists. At least 14 journalists were killed between January 2023 and May 2024 in Africa. Nevertheless, we are heartened by President Nana Akufo-Addo's undertaking to the AMC to ensure justice in the case of Ghanaian journalist Ahmed Suale who was killed five years ago. Justice delayed is justice denied, we therefore appeal to all concerned authorities to work towards resolving all cases of killings of journalists and media workers across the world, especially the horrendous case of journalist deaths in Gaza.
2. We note the **weaponization of legislations** like cyber security and crime laws, repressive press codes, disinformation provisions, and electronic communication laws that target independent press among others that have the potential to stifle freedom of expression, free media, public interest, and accountable journalism, as well as and fundamental rights and liberties.
3. The already persistent challenges facing African media are further exacerbated by the **uneven distribution of development funding**. This disproportionate allocation hinders the creation of sustainable business models and places limitations on the ability of African media to innovate and adapt to the ever-evolving digital environment. As a result, we welcome the adoption by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) of a set of principles designed to improve the relevance and effectiveness of financial and other support, particularly those focused on promoting media innovation and sustainability.
4. We urgently call for **robust measures to reinforce the safety and security of journalists**, with a particular focus on safeguarding women journalists from threats and violence.
5. We are deeply concerned by the **under-representation of diverse voices**, including the lack of gender balance at senior editorial levels and opportunities available to persons with disabilities and health issues within the African media, and need to apply a human rights-

based approach and gender equality in breaking down barriers to access information, media content and services, as well as to participate in societal development at equal footage with others.

6. We acknowledge the **potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies** to enhance media work but also note the risks that these technologies pose to media freedom and freedom of expression including as tools for coordinated and targeted disinformation campaigns against the media and promotion of unethical and irresponsible journalism.
7. We highlight the impact of **tech giants sharing content produced by African journalists without making any investment.**
8. We express concern over the **insufficient coverage, the low level of media preparedness to respond to climate change, natural disasters, and crisis situations**, and the lack of awareness of environmental issues by the African media outlets which hinder public engagement and action towards better environmental practices, management, and sustainability by all.

Recommendations and Commitments

1. We commit to fostering a conducive environment for media freedoms and independence across Africa, including the repeal, and/or amendment of laws that restrict press freedom, media development, including public service media and community media, and also ensure the protection of media professionals and journalists from various forms of press freedom threats and violations both online and offline.
2. We urge states to uphold their duty in line with national constitutions, and regional and international standards to ensure that journalists can work freely and safely; including through investigating and prosecuting attacks against journalists who become targets whenever they expose wrongdoings and hold power holders to scrutiny.
3. We call for the provision of mental health support and resources for journalists, recognizing the psychological toll of working in hostile environments and the importance of mental well-being for effective journalism. We call for increased reforms in media workspaces, including better welfare and capacity building for the human resource of media entities; investment in innovation to respond to new interests and communities, the acquisition of digital skills for media operatives, gender transformative policies, the promotion of entrepreneurial journalism, and strategic business models.
4. We call for journalists' rights to be upheld in line with the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, adopted in 1998 and amended in 2022, that compels governments, employers, and media workers organizations to endorse and support in practice their obligations and commitments to freedom of association, the elimination of discrimination in whatever form and a safe and healthy working environment.
5. We urge African governments to enact laws and policies to align the changing technologies with viable business models to encourage tech companies benefiting from content produced by African media to plough back the proceeds in the growth and development of the media on the continent.
6. We advocate for the integration of disability and diversity, equality and inclusion into media editorial policies, inclusive employment and management practices, and accessible media

content generation through guidelines and frameworks on gender equality and social inclusion, ensuring that all voices are represented and heard within the African media landscape. This includes implementing affirmative action such as quota systems for PWD employment in media and other organizations and consistent coverage of public interest stories concerning persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, and displaced populations all year-round to promote awareness, understanding, and inclusion in African societies.

7. We stress the critical role of media and information literacy (MIL) and call for strengthened collaboration between media entities, technologists, fact-checkers, civil society, and government entities to enhance journalists' competencies and societal resilience against disinformation. This entails forging alliances with academia to update journalism curricula and preparing journalists to navigate contemporary challenges, including emerging technologies.
8. We emphasize the need to promote ethical journalism practices and call for the establishment of guidelines and training programs to uphold integrity, accuracy, and accountability in media reporting.
9. We call on academic institutions to include within their curricula, modern media training courses for journalists, and content creators that take into account, the emerging developments in technology, and evidence-based reporting particularly concerning climate change and environmental issues, to upskill African media and make them fit for the 21st century.
10. We encourage app developers to innovate solutions tailored to African challenges by creating applications designed to aid the media in data gathering and validation. These initiatives should prioritize homegrown solutions that address specific needs and contexts within the African media landscape.
11. We urge stakeholders to provide more resources for homegrown solutions, technology, and digital tools to facilitate the full utilization of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies while safeguarding against risks like bias and discrimination.
12. We urge the private sector, particularly multinational companies to uphold their duty to ensure that human rights including media freedom and access to information are protected in all the jurisdictions in which they operate.
13. We urge state authorities to develop policies that ensure fair revenue sharing with big tech companies like Meta, Google, and X (formerly Twitter), drawing inspiration from legislative examples like Australia's revenue-sharing laws and the ongoing case against Google by South African publishers.
14. Collaborative efforts with policymakers and international organizations are essential to address regulatory gaps and ensure media sustainability through adequate compensation for shared content.
15. We call on the media to contribute to the Africa We Want under Agenda 2063, by prioritizing the production and promotion of accessible and relevant content, including in Indigenous languages to foster diversity in media, inclusion, equality and access to information across communities, nations and tribes. Cross-border collaboration between media outlets and journalists should be enabled to facilitate the sharing of local stories across the region.



16. We urge stakeholders to consciously solicit media input into assessment under African Peer Review Mechanisms (APRM) to collate diverse perspectives and reflect local realities
17. We call on the media to promote Africa's economic growth through sustained reporting on the ACFTA protocol in trade and services which has the potential to increase investments that will benefit the media industry, the AFCFTA protocol on intellectual property rights which has a direct impact on the media industry and the AFCFTA protocol on digital trade which directly impacts the digital economy for Africa.
18. We call on UNESCO in partnership with the African Union to lead in the development of the Media and Information Literacy and Digital Competencies Pan-African Policy and Strategy that should also guide the development of national MIL and digital competencies' policies.

Conclusion

We reaffirm the importance of committing governments and media conglomerates to all the principles and rights at work, creating safe and conducive operating environments for journalists to undertake their professional duties. We reiterate our commitment to building a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable media landscape in Africa; that upholds the principles of freedom, innovation, environmental responsibility, diversity, editorial independence, and affirmative action for persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, and displaced populations. We commit to playing our rightful role in reshaping the often stereotypical and negative narrative on Africa, and not be bystanders while others define, rewrite, and tell our story. Through collective action and solidarity, the African media we envision will contribute significantly to the continent's development and prosperity.

We thank the Government and people of the Republic of Ghana, the AMC steering committee, the local organizing committee, and the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) for hosting a successful 3rd Africa Media Convention

Presented at Accra, Ghana on the 17th day of May 2024, confirmed by delegates as of 31st May 2024 and committed by the Steering Committee on 3rd June 2024.

ABOUT AMC

The Africa Media Convention (AMC) is an annual gathering that brings together journalists, editors, policymakers, academics, and media development organizations from across the African continent. It serves as a crucial platform for dialogue and collaboration on critical issues facing the African media landscape. The AMC provides a vital space for stakeholders to confront challenges and explore opportunities for a stronger, freer, and more innovative African media. It plays a significant role in promoting a vibrant and independent press across the continent.

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