

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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Renewed optimism as challenges of press freedoms tackled during the 2022 World Press Freedom Day

The African Union has reiterated its commitment to ensure journalists enjoy their rights and freedoms and are safeguarded from harassment and abuse in their line of duty. The commitment is aligned to the principles anchored in the rights to freedom of expression and access to information in conformance with Article 9 of the [African Charter on Human and People's Rights](#), and the [Declaration of Principles of Freedom of Expression and Access to Information](#) in Africa, which both guarantee individuals the right to receive information as well as the right to express and disseminate information within the law. The Declaration further reaffirms the fundamental importance of freedom of expression and access to information as individual human rights, as cornerstones of democracy and as means of ensuring respect for other human rights.



This message of the African Union to the participants at the celebrations of World Press Freedom Day 2022, in Arusha, Tanzania, was echoed by H.E. Samia Suluhu, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, while addressing the Africa Media Convention as the keynote speaker at the World Press Freedom Day. She stated that Tanzania is reviewing its media laws to ensure journalists are fully supported in dispensing their work.



President Suluhu also challenged the media stakeholders to focus more on telling the African story and shaping the global narrative of the continent. "Tanzania respects the freedom of the press, but this must also be approached with the ethics and responsibilities the media has to adhere to. The media is crucial to the development of society, and must play within the laws established, and help African governments achieve their objectives. If you don't tell your own story, no one will do it for you. We cannot only focus on what is not working, but we must also cover the successes and uniqueness of our continent", she said.

In her speech, Mrs. Leslie Richer, the Director of Information and Communication of the African Union (who was represented by Mrs. Wynne Musabayana, Head of Communication), outlined the existing African Union frameworks that seek to advance and promote the work of the fourth estate on the continent. She noted that adopted frameworks such as the [Model Law on Access to Information for Africa of 2013](#); the [Guidelines on Access to Information and Elections in Africa of 2017](#); the [African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection](#); and the [African Digital](#)

[Transformation Strategy for Africa](#), among others, have been instrumental in guiding a common and coordinated approach by African States in creating a conducive environment for the media to enjoy their rights and freedoms and to be able to advance the African narrative in a free and fair manner.

The [African Court](#), an African Union Judicial Organ headquartered in Tanzania, also allows direct access for individuals and Non- Governmental Organizations to submit cases at the Court, as an opportunity for victims of human rights violations who exhausted legal mechanisms at the national level, to seek justice.

“The African Union’s message on this World Press Freedom Day, is one of solidarity with African media, within the context of the theme “Journalism under Digital Siege”. It is to congratulate African media for their untiring efforts to tell the African story, including during the COVID19 pandemic; their important role in the development of this continent, and to give the assurance that the AU will continue to ensure that media have access to the information they need to do their work”, she stated.

Read the full statement [here](#).

The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights through Commissioner Ourveena Geereesha Topsy-Sonoo, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, highlighted the impact that online attacks have on stifling the freedom of expression and press freedom, and the direct impact on the safety and security of journalists. The Commissioner observed that journalists and other media practitioners working in a number of African countries continue to be impacted by internet and social media shutdowns, and called on States Parties to “take measures to guarantee, respect and protect the right to freedom of expression and access to information, through ensuring access to the internet and social media services, including refraining from limiting and/or disrupting this access.”

Read full statement [here](#).

The meeting was also addressed by among other key dignitaries, Tanzania’s Minister of Information, Communication and Information Technology; UNESCO’s Regional Director; the Ambassador of Sweden; the British High Commissioner; and the East Africa Editors Society.

The three-day Convention concluded with the adoption of the [Arusha Declaration World Press Freedom Day 2022](#) that captures the multi-stakeholder recommendations on the urgent need for enhanced collaboration between the media in Africa, governments, internet intermediaries, private and public sectors, civil society, national and regional human rights bodies and researchers, to mitigate against the effects of the digital siege on journalism and the media.

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