



African Media NGOs Call on the African Union to Put Media at the Heart of Development Strategies

Media support groups from across Africa have added their voice to global calls for action to put media at the heart of international development planning.

At a meeting in Grahamstown, South Africa, on September 7-8, the Africa Forum for Media Development (AFMD) was launched and the participants – representing media support groups and NGOs from sub-Saharan regions – issued an open letter addressed to the Africa Union, the European Union and the OECD calling for better recognition of media development as an integral part of development strategies.

“Governments, donors and policy makers need to recognise that media are intrinsic components of democratic development, rather than simply channels for advocacy and promotion of messages in support of development policy,” the letter states.

The new regional forum is calling on governments and donors to create financial mechanisms for media development that are independent of undue political or government influence and to increase overall support to media in Africa.

In launching the Africa Forum for Media Development media support groups agreed to work more closely together in lobbying governments and international institutions for targeted and long-term support to strengthen free, independent and pluralistic media systems in Africa.

Participants will set up an internet forum to exchange information and materials on best practice. They will also work closely together in monitoring and evaluating the impact of media projects and they agreed a programme to map the media development sector in Africa.

“Media support groups in Africa have the expertise and commitment to improve media freedom and independence in Africa. We have come together in the Africa Regional Forum in order to make sure that our voice is heard by governments, donors and policy makers”, said Gabriel Baglo, Director of the Africa office of the International Federation of Journalists.

The AFMD is part of the Global Forum for Media Development, a network of 500 international, regional and national organisations dedicated to putting media development at the heart of development strategies and policies. The conference elected Gabriel Baglo of the IFJ Africa office in Senegal and Jeanette Minnie of Zambezi Fox in South Africa as the two African representatives on the GFMD’s global Steering Committee.

Conclusions of the AFMD, attended by more than 60 participants from across the continent, will be presented to the GFMD 2008 World Conference in Athens on December 7-10.

The AFMD's founding conference was supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Open Society Foundation Media Programme in London. It was organised in cooperation with the Highway Africa 2008 conference of Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) in Windhoek, Namibia.

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