



INTER AMERICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTING

IAPA, IAB issue joint statement on Information Society

MIAMI, Florida (January 27, 2003)—The Inter American Press Association (IAPA) and the International Association of Broadcasting (IAB) today issued a joint declaration stating that the upcoming World Summit on the Information Society should include in its agenda “the need to fully respect the principles of freedom of the press and information, as recognized in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Declaration of Chapultepec, endorsed by the overwhelming majority of the governments of the Americas.”

The joint statement, titled “Independent Media in a Democratic Society,” sets out specific points that the IAPA and the IAB will put before the World Summit, whose regional meeting is scheduled for January 29-31 in the Dominican Republic. The meeting, in which representatives of Latin American governments, civil society and non-governmental organizations will participate, will issue proposals from the region for the World Summit itself, to be held in December this year in Geneva, Switzerland, and in Tunis, Tunisia, in 2005.

The aim of the World Summit on the Information Society, sponsored by the United Nations through its International Telecommunications Union, is to draw up a plan of action for improving the flow of information in the digital age and bringing about a better understanding of the technological revolution, under the concept that the world is undergoing transformation of the industrial society into the information society.

An international IAPA delegation, headed by President Andrés García and Information Society Committee Chairman Saturnino Herrero Mitjans, is due to head to the Dominican Republic tomorrow (Tuesday). In addition to García, of *Novedades de Quintana Roo*, Cancún, Mexico, and Herrero Mitjans, *Clarín*, Buenos Aires, Argentina, the delegation is made up of Andrés García Lavín, *Novedades de Mérida*, Mérida, Mexico; Rafael Molina, *Ahora*, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; Alejo Miró Quesada Cisneros, *El Comercio*, Lima, Peru; Bartolomé Mitre, *La Nación*, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Ruddy González, *El Expreso*, and Miguel Antonio Franjul, *Listín Diario*, both of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; Carlos Salinas, *El Diario de Coahuila*, Mexico, and IAPA Press Freedom Coordinator Ricardo Trotti.

The joint declaration, signed by García and IAB President Eladio Lárez of the Venezuelan Television Industry Federation, contains as resolutions the following three points:

- 1) “The need to fully respect the principles of Freedom of Expression and Information, as recognized in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man and Article 10 of the 1997 UNESCO Sofia Declaration, ratified by that organization’s General Conference that same

year, as well as the Declaration of Chapultepec, endorsed by an overwhelming majority of the governments of the Americas.”

- 2) *“The need to recognize Freedom of Expression and of the Press as a strategic institutional freedom, a mainstay for the existence of democratic order in contemporary society, as well as the fact that it is essential for there to be a full State of Law and for respect for and strengthening of the people’s freedoms, that the lack of full Freedom of Expression amounts to a formula empty of content.”*
- 3) *“The need for recognition that subjecting any initiative to the basic principle of legality, with full respect for laws and regulations governing the administration of broadcast frequencies, is the only way of guaranteeing the effective and orderly use of the possibilities offered by the new and old technologies.”*

Following is the full text of the declaration:

Independent Media in a Democratic Society – Joint Declaration

The Inter American Press Association and the International Association of Broadcasting, which share the principle of defense of Free Speech and Press Freedom as a prerequisite for the existence of Free and Democratic Societies, have agreed to jointly sign the following platform of considerations, contributions and principles on the occasion of the World Summit on the Information Society and preparations for it:

- The existence of free and independent news media is the essential prerequisite for the Free Expression of Ideas and the guarantee of plurality of information, which together comprise the basic foundation on which a free society is built.
- The free access by individuals, and therefore the news media, to sources of information must be safeguarded and strengthened in order to ensure the existence of a vigorous public opinion, the underpinning of a responsible citizenry.
- The practice of journalism being the exercise of an individual right, the coverage of news must not be subjected to any restriction whatsoever; moreover, both the print and broadcast media must enjoy the same rights, without distinction.
- It is the sole responsibility of each news medium to decide autonomously and independently upon the ethics that should govern its activity.
- Commercial broadcasting must be privately-owned and operated competitively, it being an activity in the public interest, and therefore nations should restrict their role to the distribution and administration of broadcast frequencies that have been assigned to them by the international community.

INSTRUMENTAL IN FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY

In every country and region where there is full enjoyment of unfettered publication and circulation of newspapers, magazines and periodicals, as well as free and independent privately-owned radio and television broadcasting, a pluralist system of news media is strengthened, and this is essential for there effectively to be Democracy and Fundamental Rights.

- Independent news media are the means by which Freedom of Expression is manifested.
- Free and independent news media are a fundamental element in the relationship between the government, political parties and various groups and sectors of society for the formation of public opinion.
- This mediation role that news companies play, through their expressly institutionalized condition, is essential not only for the consolidation of democracy but for its continuance.
- The absence of Freedom of Expression diminishes the freedom of the citizen and this becomes clear only when it no longer exists. It is therefore essential to wage an ongoing battle for it to exist in full.

Consequently:

For there to be full Freedom of Expression there must exist news media that, in an environment of free competition and plurality, carry out their role with financial independence, seeking the credibility that makes them deserving of the public's trust.

Any attempt to impose government controls on news media content and programs violates one of the most important operational characteristics of Freedom of Expression – that is, to formulate their own content, opinions and programs under the sole responsibility of their publishers and broadcasters.

Public opinion is the only arbiter of the truth. In the choices it makes each day it decides whether to support or reject the media as to the credibility they deserve. It is essential to trust the public and its will to make such choices must be preserved so that through free choice pluralism in society is assured.

INDEPENDENT NEWS MEDIA AND THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

The importance of new media in today's world, their clear impact on all the processes of development and democratization, as well as the major technological changes, put information technologies and services in a position of far-reaching importance for the future of society.

Privately-owned, free news media contribute in an exemplary fashion to international understanding and cultural diversity, opening up paths of Freedom that are also paths of Respect, Tolerance and Peace.

The World Summit on the Information Society is an opportunity for the international community to strengthen Freedom of Expression of Thought.

The Inter American Press Association and the International Association of Broadcasting, organizations that represent free and independent print and broadcast media in the Americas, believe that the Information

Society cannot, nor should not, stray from the guiding principle enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the Fundamental Right of Freedom of Expression of Thought.

It is upon the basis of this Article 19 that other essential mainstays of freedom of expression are founded, such as plurality of ideas and opinions, which results from the existence and functioning of free and independent media.

We sustain that these principles are also applicable to the new information and communication technologies, and that the Information Society should be based on clear concepts of Freedom without confusing terminologies or criteria that could lead to concepts that would restrict the flow of information and result in arbitrary mechanisms of control of the news media.

We, the Inter American Press Association and the International Association of Broadcasting, propose that in the Agenda, Content and Principles of the World Summit on the Information Society the following three points be included.

1. *“The need to fully respect the principles of Freedom of Expression and Information, as recognized in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man and Article 10 of the 1997 UNESCO Sofia Declaration, ratified by that organization’s General Conference that same year, as well as the Declaration of Chapultepec, endorsed by an overwhelming majority of the governments of the Americas.”*
2. *“The need to recognize Freedom of Expression and of the Press as a strategic institutional freedom, a mainstay for the existence of democratic order in contemporary society, as well as the fact that it is essential for there to be a full State of Law and for respect for and strengthening of the people’s freedoms, that the lack of full Freedom of Expression amounts to a formula empty of content.”*
3. *“The need for recognition that subjecting any initiative to the basic principle of legality, with full respect for laws and regulations governing the administration of broadcast frequencies, is the only way of guaranteeing the effective and orderly use of the possibilities offered by the new and old technologies.”*

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