



## **Open letter from the Inter American Press Association**

*The sustainability of journalism during and after the pandemic, a responsibility for the democracies of America*

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Modern societies recognize freedom of the press and the work of the news media as fundamental pillars for democracy, respect for human rights, the containment of authoritarian forces, and the exercise of full and informed citizenship.

The Inter American Press Association has as a foundational principle the defense of these pillars when embodied in journalistic organizations operating in a context of sustainability and autonomy.

In the last decade, changes in technology, while increasing reach of the media, have created enormous economic disparities with the global digital platforms, putting the financial viability of professional news media under enormous pressure.

The absence of a clear and universally sustainable economic model jeopardizes the role of professional news media as providers of reliable and quality information against global technology-enabled platforms where disinformation and false news can proliferate.

This situation has become even more critical with the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically affecting revenue and working capital for news media.

Yet in spite of the deep economic difficulties posed by the health crisis, the news media, some classified as essential activities, have intensified their work, facilitating the essential connection between governments and citizens who need reliable information. The growing importance of reliable information, generated through professional news media, is in conflict with the economic paradigm of this crisis. In short, the newspaper industry is currently navigating a perfect storm that poses an immediate threat to the very survival of the role of journalism in democracy.

Many developed countries, notably the European Union, have begun to address this critical global issue with State Policies the results of which will strengthen the sustainability of journalism. Examples of these “enabling” policies include introducing tax incentives and grants for local businesses to remain open; the strengthening of regulation of intellectual property; as well as introducing more equitable tax policy to include the digital ecosystem. A key feature is that all policies are transparent, non-discriminatory, and do not impinge on the freedom and editorial independence of the news media.

The Inter American Press Association considers it essential to alert democratic governments in this hemisphere about the strategic importance of this issue and urge them to move expeditiously to debate and adopt similar approaches.

In times of crisis and emergency, independent reporting and professional journalism are even more essential for free nations. Ensuring their viability and permanence is a responsibility of democratic societies.

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