

## Letter of Aspirations

October 2008

It is the task of journalism to seek and to disseminate information, ideas, and opinions exercising freedom of expression. In meeting that task, the profession enables every citizen to exercise that freedom fully and to maintain the right to information that is indispensable for reaching decisions: from those that concern the exercise of his or her civil sovereignty to those that allow him or her to live a full life in accord with his or her desires and legitimate ambitions.

To meet this objective, the press should be able to count on all guarantees that allow it to collect and disclose the news. An independent Judicial Power that assures respect for the inherent rights of the individual and that guarantees the strength of democratic institutions is essential. As a consequence, it is fitting for the press to promote the values of democracy and to defend freedom of expression, affirming the right of each individual to express himself or herself without fear of reprisal of any kind, whatever its origin.

The effectiveness of the journalist's task will be determined by the level of confidence and the support of readers, who constitute the ultimate tribunal. To earn that credibility is a commitment for the press, obliging it to the highest level of transparency, independence and honesty. This responsibility must be at the forefront at the moment of deciding what should be published, and the press should be rigorous in its standards of verification. It ought never publish anything it knows to be inexact, in the same way that it cannot fall into the dishonesty of spreading information as its own, and original, when it is the work of another.

The press ought to acknowledge in a timely form its errors in describing events, and ought to be prepared to publish critical information and critical analyses regarding journalism. The press should be open to publishing opinions that differ with the point of view of a journalist or of a publishing entity, as well as reports of events that can harm its own interests, if those opinions and reports are in accord with the criteria applied to other news: public interest and accuracy.

Editors ought to offer to the persons and institutions implicated in the news the opportunity to make known their version of events in order to approach as close as possible to the truth and to guarantee pluralism and diversity. The same incident can be considered or interpreted in various manners. The press serves the public best when it presents a

rich variety of points of view and always seeks out the greater number of sources of information, even those that some might prefer to ignore or conceal.

It is indispensable for the public to be aware of these factors to differentiate clearly among what is advertising, what is information, and what is opinion. The press and journalists ought to avoid conflicts of interest, whether they be political, financial, or other in nature. They should be responsible even in cases in which conflict is merely apparent. And when conflict does exist, or is inevitable, it must be made public to prevent it from affecting editorial judgment.

Consulting the greatest number of sources, and identifying them, contributes to transparency and enriches the credibility of the press. But at times there are circumstances that require anonymity of sources, although they must never be used lightly. Anonymity ought to be used to protect sources only when the information cannot be obtained in any other way.

The press, given the task it undertakes, cannot renounce the reporting of matters that affect public interest and common good, but it should take care not to wound persons and institutions unnecessarily, always assuring the supreme right of citizens to receive information.