

The Khartoum - Rumbek Declaration

Adopted 6 December 2005

Preamble:

Recognising:

- The media will be a decisive factor now that the Protocols of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the interim Constitutions have been adopted.
- The needs for the Media to take a strong and supportive role, helping to inform the public about the peace agreement and its implications, facilitating public understanding, participation and reconciliation and helping to diffuse the many threats to the peace process through professional media activity,
- The frameworks put forward by the CPA, and the necessity for the Sudanese media and civil society to work under and respect the two systems laid forward

We, the members of the National Round Table on Freedom of Expression and independent Media in Sudan, comprised of media workers and civil society representatives from Southern and Northern Sudan declare:

Legal and Policy Framework:

1. Having agreed to a peace process and an interim constitution, we now need laws, policies, and practices that comply with the Interim Constitution and the peace process under the CPA. We call for laws that guarantee Freedom of Expression, Freedom of the Press, and access to information. We call for laws and policies that uphold best international practices in the areas of defamation, licensing and registration
2. Welcome the cooperation demonstrated by the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) and the leaders of the Southern Assembly in receiving the policy framework for media in the South prepared by Southern Sudanese media workers and civil society
3. Appreciate the GoSS request that that the Southern Sudan Roundtable submits to the regional bodies a draft media law and a draft law for Public Service Broadcasting (PSB)
4. Welcome the strong encouragement from the first Vice President of the Republic of the Sudan, Mr. Salva Kiir Mayardit, to the national round table
5. Recommend that the national authorities take immediate steps towards the reform of the existing laws to ensure that they meet and respect international standards
6. Look forward to cooperating with the Government of National Unity and the National Legislature, and to offer the professional expertise and experience of media and civil society stakeholders in reforming the national laws

Professional Associations and self-regulation at national level:

7. Strongly recommend that the Media shall be self-regulated to preserve its independence and strengthen its ability to play its role as a guarantor of democracy and good governance
8. Stress that the current Press Council (PC) does not meet the requirements for a professional self-regulatory body. As it is currently constituted, the PC exercises quasi-legislative power that is not conducive to press freedom
9. Recommend that the PC needs to be substituted by an independent self-regulatory body representing the sector and its interests, that will exercise its authority at a moral and professional level, but not judicial
10. Strongly encourage the journalists and media organisations working in Southern Sudan to exercise their right to association and continue the process towards the creation of a Southern Union of Journalists and other media associations to serve the interests of their members and the profession
11. Strongly encourage journalists and media organisations country-wide to exercise their right to association and set up freely their own independent associations, including an All Sudanese Union of Journalists, and other media associations to serve the interests of their members and of the profession

Code of Ethics

12. Recognise the existence of universal principles guiding the ethics of journalists
13. Stress that as part of our commitment to self-regulation, Sudanese Journalists must take the responsibility of drafting their own code of ethics making use of international good standards and practices
14. Recommend that in implementing the Code of Ethics, journalists must be sensitive to the diversity in the country, including regional, cultural, religious differences and specificities. They must be human rights and gender sensitive

Public Service Broadcasting and Private Broadcasting

15. Affirm the vital role of public service broadcasting in the service of the peoples of Sudan and in the defence promotion and protection of public interest
16. Recommend that the state radio and television should be transformed into independent public service institutions
17. Encourage the further development of private broadcasting and community broadcasting in line with the principles set forward in the preamble and the commitment to the peace process
18. Call for the establishment of an independent body to allocate and regulate the frequencies for radio and tv broadcasting

Media Development: National Needs and needs in the South and the North

19. Recognize that the war has affected the media institutions and capacities both the North and the South of Sudan
20. Recognise that there is an overall need to develop infrastructure and to build capacity with special attention to the media in the South where all infrastructures need to be constructed and created
21. Urge the governments of national unity and the government of Southern Sudan to adopt favourable taxation policies that encourage and support the development of media
22. Call upon the government of national unity, the government of Southern Sudan, and the international and donor community to:
 - Support and/or ensure the implementation of all above recommendations
 - Improve existing technical capacities, skill upgrading, new information technology training and rehabilitation
 - Strengthen professional development and skill enhancement of all media professions, with a particular emphasis towards women professionals
 - Provide basic communication skills, journalism studies, design and layout, broadcasting and technical skills in equipment, maintenance and installation
 - Provide training of trainers to strengthen local competence and expertise
 - Establish media communication and information technology institutions and academy
 - Establish media resource centres in different regions of Sudan with the purpose of supporting journalists and diverse mass media, including traditional forms of communication
 - Rehabilitate and upgrade existing media outlets, infrastructures and institutions, such as radio and TV studios and transmitter stations
 - Establish Press printing facilities in the South, and modernise printing facilities in the North
 - Build and enhance infrastructures for distribution of print and electronic media in all areas of Sudan

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