

The Media Association Jamaica Limited, MAJ wants today, May 3, World Press Freedom Day to mark a recommitment by lawmakers to making legislative changes to enhance press freedom, media rights and access to information in Jamaica.

The MAJ is encouraging legislators to expeditiously consider the recommendations of the Hugh Small Defamation Committee on libel reform and to set a legislative timetable to quickly implement the recommendation made. The Association is also encouraging members of the Committee to be bold and incisive and take progressive decisions on those matters on which the Committee did not find unanimity. "Strong leadership is required, where difficult decisions are needed", the MAJ said.

In pressing for modernisation of defamation laws, the MAJ notes that this has been a route used in other countries to reduce corruption, enhance transparency and encourage good governance. "Jamaica should be no different", its statement declares.

The MAJ also wants to present administration to demonstrate a commitment to upholding the laws of Access to Information. "Under this legislation, much has been left wanting" the MAJ said noting that, "This government should not allow the progress made under the Access to Information Act to be frustrated by inaction and a lack of commitment". For this reason, the MAJ wants the government to take steps to remove from our law books any vestigages of the Official Secrets Act .

"If Jamaica can make progress in these areas, then we can help the region transform our journalistic freedoms and practices", the statement said.

The Media Association has commended media workers in Jamaica and the region who have over the past year stood firmly behind sound journalistic practices and integrity and has encourages them to remain focussed and committed to these ideals.