

Media Association Jamaica Limited

Chairman's Message

May 3, 2011: This the 20th anniversary of the commemoration of World Press Freedom Day (WPFd), we in the Jamaican media pause to note the fact that our country, our democracy and our people have benefitted from a relatively free press for the entire two decades of this global commemoration.

Over the years, there have been some challenges and some difficulties but overall our political administrations, our civil society groups and our media have been able to cultivate an environment in which traditional and new media have grown and multiplied.

Now is not the time to change that!

We must resolve today that whatever challenges that now exist cannot be too significant for us to resolve in the interest of freedom of expression, responsibility and democracy. Freedom of expression is nurtured by respect and facilitated by consultation. Our policymakers and regulators can enable our media to grow even more and to flourish by first respecting dialogue, consultation and compromise where positions differ.

These are challenging times in media and, as the Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban-Ki Moon said in his message for WPFd, "The media revolution is triggering new debates about freedom of expression, about the nature of regulation, about the balance between expression and responsibility. We must not shy away from exploring all angles of these questions. We must all rise to the occasion and accept the responsibility of change".

This means responsible dialogue and responsible consultation will fulfill the mandate. It means that the appropriate manner of the consultation and the dialogue cannot be disrespectful nor can it be intimidatory. It means while there must be divergence of views among stakeholders,

there cannot be the dismissal of views.

The Media Association Jamaica Limited (MAJ) salutes all media workers, managers and owners this WPFD and commend you for the work that you continue to do. In the past year the Association has seen progress made in reforming our defamation laws, but the process is incomplete; progress has been made with regard to reviewing the Access To Information Laws, but the work there is incomplete; changes to the use of Government Reserved Time has been taking place, but the process is incomplete and major changes in the regulations for broadcasting have been proposed but the consultative and deliberative process is also incomplete.

We recommit our organisation to the process of meaningful consultation and deliberation of these issues in a respectful, even if dynamic, manner. *Elsewhere in the World in 2010, 100 journalists have been killed. None fell in Jamaica*

; but we must recognize that we should together maintain that record, and we must go further and prevent commercial or official slights against media workers or media organizations and freedoms.