

Celebrating Five Years of the Bali Media Forum

Ethics, Journalism and Democracy: Taking the Hate out of Media and Politics

In conjunction with the Bali Democracy Forum

Bali-Indonesia, November 5-8, 2013

FINAL STATEMENT

We the 70 representatives of editors, journalists' groups, press councils and media support bodies from 24 countries, participants of the 5th Bali Media Forum "*Ethics, Journalism and Democracy: Taking the Hate out of Media and Politics*" organised by the Thomson Foundation, the Indonesian Press Council and the Institute for Peace and Democracy and in partnership with the Ethical Journalism Network, meeting in Bali on November 5-8 2013:

Reiterating the principles and conclusions of the previous four Bali Media Forums, in particular:

***That** creating an enabling environment to support free media and independent journalism, without any form of legal or political pressure, must be a priority for all governments committed to democracy,*

***That** governments must avoid imposing forms of regulation that may curb independence of journalism and must protect and nourish the rights of media and the information rights of citizens and journalists, including free expression and freedom of association, and*

***That** transparent, professional and independent self-regulation of journalism across all platforms should be created to:*

- *advocate and campaign for press freedom and good governance in media,*
- *contribute to education within society on the role of free media in democracy,*
- *mediate problems that arise between media and their audience,*
- *promote access to public information and to information technology that will ensure the full participation of citizens in democratic society,*

Affirming to the governments attending the 6th Bali Democracy Forum, November 7-8 that free, inclusive and tolerant journalism is an essential precondition of free and fair elections and

Calling on them to provide more support to carry out election coverage training that will prepare the media to effectively report elections, including the up-coming parliamentary and presidential elections in Indonesia,

We declare our support for the following principles discussed during the Forum:

Media and editorial leaders should prepare well for elections by developing reporting guidelines and ensuring that their staff are well trained, informed about the procedures and rules of the election, and fully aware of their ethical obligations.

Media should guard against all forms of unscrupulous interference in editorial work including attempts to use media to spread malicious lies, hate speech and any information that is deliberately designed to incite violence and disputes between communities.

Online sources and social media can greatly strengthen journalism and give added value to media by allowing different voices to be heard at election time.

But social media networks are no substitute for ethical, informed reporting and media should create effective structures for monitoring and moderating comments to eliminate rumour, speculation and hate-speech.

Media should review and constantly update their election coverage to correct errors and to strive for honesty and balance in reporting. Media should seek to ensure that all candidates and parties – large and small – are treated with equal consideration and that minority opinions and the views of marginalized and vulnerable groups are also heard.

Media should also prepare for the entire election process – including sensitive and appropriate coverage of the most critical moments on the day of the election itself and the days after voting.

Media should ensure that the public are made aware of the critical issues of the election including information about the voting process, the views and manifestos of candidates, and, more importantly, the public's view of what are the crucial priorities for political action.

Media organisations, editors and journalists' groups should work together to define a common approach on how to cover the election including agreement to

- Seek guarantees from government and political parties about safety and security of journalists;
- Avoid all attempts to manipulate media or use corrupt processes – such as paid for journalism – to distort coverage; and
- Establish common standards of reporting that will
- Report in context or avoid all forms of political speech that is hateful or inciting violence.

In addition, media organisations should put in place internal systems of governance to avoid conflicts of interest, to promote transparency and editorial independence and to protect newsrooms from undue interference in the work of journalists by owners and shareholders.

Traditional media should, where appropriate, reach out to online news portals and established online information sources to encourage the adoption of ethical standards and quality reporting across the whole landscape of public information.

Journalists, editors and owners should establish their own independent organisations to encourage professional solidarity. These organisations should work together to promote a national infrastructure that will encourage quality journalism and self-regulation through press or media

councils, which are fully independent of the state and government.

In particular, election coverage training is crucial for media to be prepared for free, independent, inclusive and tolerant coverage. Such training should:

- Put ethical standards at the heart of any course and use the best training modules and approaches available;
- Focus on the dangers of hate-speech and the threats posed by sectarianism and extremism;
- Involve editors and provide specific advice and training for them to prepare for the elections;
- Ensure that media fully involve and engage with the public;
- Be organized in advance and during the election period as part of a strategic programmed involving all relevant groups in the journalistic community.

The Forum calls for a follow-up programme of action in 2014, including:

- To continue to support actions by the network of press councils in the Asia-Pacific region to assist in the creation of independent media councils and to promote free, independent and pluralistic media;
- To back the efforts to create cooperation between press councils, journalists and editors in the ASEAN region;
- To be involved in and support the EJN global study on paid journalism and to use the study to launch a campaign against corruption in media in the region;
- To aim to organise election coverage training in countries holding elections in 2014 and following years based on the principles agreed by the Forum;
- To promote an exchange of information and best practice on ethics in election coverage, in particular efforts to create solidarity among media and to agree common standards for election reporting.
- To aim to organise the 6th Bali Media Forum and to involve social media contributors and bloggers adhering to ethical standards of journalism in the event.

Finally, the Forum expresses its strong view that the engagement and dialogue with media professionals made possible by its association with the Bali Democracy Forum has made an invaluable contribution to building a culture of solidarity among media professionals in the region and we call for continued support for the Bali Democracy Forum and the Bali Media Forum in 2014 and beyond.

Bali, Indonesia, November 8, 2013.