

## Joint Statement

On the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission of Human Rights on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Mr. Ambeyi Ligabo, the Special Rapporteur for freedom of expression of the Organization of American States, Mr. Eduardo Bertoni, the Representative on Freedom of the Media of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Mr. Miklos Haraszti, and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Mr. Andrew Chigovera, wish to pay tribute to the courage and professionalism of the numerous journalists and other media professionals either killed or wounded on account of their professional activities. In addition to the dangers of conflict areas and war zones, journalists frequently face murder attempts, intimidations and harassment because of their inquiries on political, social and economic issues. Unfortunately, in most cases these crimes are not adequately punished; an end to impunity for the perpetrators of such acts would reinforce the role that the Rule of Law must play in all societies.

While the role of private enterprises is crucial to the development of the media, the growing phenomenon of media concentration might prevent the public from receiving a plurality of views and affect the independence of press professionals. Likewise, the adoption and the implementation of legislation against defamation and libel in the sphere of criminal law might boost pressure on journalists and media professionals so as to hamper their capacity of sound judgment and restrict their freedom of expression.

The signatories of this statement underline the importance of all forms of the media, including the print media, radio, television and the Internet, in the exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, which is a fundamental and inalienable right that contributes to the consolidation of democracy and to the development of a civil society based on mutual respect, dialogue and tolerance.

Imparting information, spreading knowledge and creating awareness are basic components of this right. Any obstacle to the free circulation of ideas and opinions hinders freedom of expression and its beneficial consequences. In this context, the work of the Press and media professionals represents an exceptional tool for the promotion of freedom of expression throughout the world.

On this World Press Freedom Day, the four Rapporteurs call upon Governments around the world to foster conditions that are favorable to the full exercise of the right to freedom of expression.