30 YEARS OF THE WINDHOEK DECLARATION

INFORMATION AS A PUBLIC GOOD

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2021
3 MAY

#WorldPressFreedomDay

Impact & Visibility Report
INFORMATION AS A PUBLIC GOOD
WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2021
GLOBAL CONFERENCE
29 April - 3 May | Windhoek, Namibia
A SNAPSHOT

• The 2021 World Press Freedom Day Global Conference took place from 29 April to 3 May, marking the 30th anniversary of the 1991 Windhoek Seminar and Declaration.
• Over 3,000 participants registered virtually and 150 attended in person in Windhoek.
• Participants from 150 different countries.
• Over 40 sessions and 250 speakers, with most of the plenaries held in hybrid format from the Safari Hotel in Windhoek, Namibia, the same venue of the 1991 Seminar.
• 4 Main Plenaries and 6 Regional Forums organized with a process that involved regional consultations as well as thematic consultations with a wide array of stakeholders.
• Over 100 World Press Freedom Day celebrations in more than 30 countries.
• World Press Freedom Day (in all 6 UN official languages) had 463K mentions on social media and #WorldPressFreedomDay was the most used hashtag in social media posts mentioning world press freedom day (analysis period from May 2 – 4, 2021).
• About 1,700 media articles in the 6 UN official languages mentioned World Press Freedom Day, and reached a potential number of 1.6B readers. At least 430 articles made a reference to Maria Ressa, 2021 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize Laureate.
• World Press Freedom Voices messages received by over a dozen global leaders from government and relevant organizations.
The award was given to Maria Ressa, Filipino investigative journalist and CEO of Rappler, on 2 May. An independent international jury praised Ressa’s ‘unerring fight’ for freedom of expression amidst online attacks and targeted campaigns as well as facing charges of cyber-libel linked to her investigative reporting.

Highlights speakers

- Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences
- Irene Khan, UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression
- Agnès Callamard, Secretary General, Amnesty International
- Maria Ressa, CEO of Rappler
- Christophe Deloire, Director general of Reporters Without Borders
- Anthony Bellanger, Secretary-General, International Federation of Journalists
- Swe Win, Editor in Chief of Myanmar Now
- Julie Owono, Member of Facebook’s Oversight Board. Executive Director of Internet sans Frontiers
- Miranda Johnson, The Economist, Deputy Executive Editor
- Stephen Dunbar-Johnson, President, International of The New York Times
- Nicholas Clegg, Vice-President for Global Affairs and Communications at Facebook
- Rod Sims, Chair of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
- Seema Mustafa, President, Editors Guild, India
- Věra Jourová, Vice President of the European Commission for Values and Transparency

Read the full Programme here
Key Outcomes

Adoption of Windhoek + 30 Declaration

The participants of the conference adopted the “Windhoek +30 Declaration” taking forward the spirit of the original 1991 Windhoek Declaration while acknowledging the persistent and new challenges to media freedom. The Declaration contains recommendations to nurture a diversity of viable public, private and community media, while safeguarding their independence. It also calls on mainstreaming Media and Information Literacy, as well as to work on ensuring transparency of technological companies.

Read the Windhoek+30 Declaration
Read about the 30th anniversary of the 1991 Windhoek Declaration

Launch of the UNESCO-ICFJ Study

“The Chilling: Global trends in online violence against women journalists”

On 30 April, an online panel with María Ressa and Julie Posetti, International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) Global Director of Research, discussed the findings of The Chilling, UNESCO-ICFJ’s pioneering study on the sharp increase in online violence against women journalists and how these attacks are now inextricably bound up with disinformation, intersectional discrimination, and populist politics. The report was featured in leading media outlets across the globe including The Guardian, Al Jazeera, Le Monde, Lusa, Rappler, The Washington Post, CNN, EFE, RTVE, and BBC World Service.

“The Declaration’s urgent call for press freedom and free access to information is as relevant as ever.”
Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General, message for World Press Freedom Day 2021 referring to the 1991 Windhoek Declaration on free, independent, and pluralistic press

“The UN’s warning about a tide of misogynistic hate needs urgent attention.”
The Guardian’s Editorial. 9 May 2021
For the first time in a World Press Freedom Day Global Conference, 6 Regional Forums took place in parallel to take forward spirit the regional declarations inspired by the 1991 Windhoek Declaration as well as to discuss the 2021 theme against regional-specific challenges and opportunities. The outcomes of the forums included a series of recommendations to foster media viability, transparency of online platforms, and media and information literacy, and were presented during the Plenary “Voices from the Regions” on 3 May.

The session ‘Voices from the Regions’ was preceded by an opening dialogue with Agnes Callamard, Secretary General of Amnesty International preceded the panel moderated by Gwen Lister, co-chair of the 1991 Windhoek Seminar, and Alain Modoux, former UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information at the time of 1991 first historic conference.

More information on Regional Forums:

- Africa Forum to reflect on press freedom 30 years after the Windhoek Declaration
- Africa Forum calls for adoption of access to information laws
- We Have to Show Our Value as Journalists: Voices from Asia and the Pacific
- Experts take a close look at the state of Arab media during WPFD
- Fuerte compromiso de América Latina y el Caribe con la libertad de prensa

Click to watch the Regional Forums:

- Africa Forum / 30 Years After the Windhoek Declaration
- Arab region Forum / 25 years After the Sana’a Declaration
- Asia and the Pacific Forum
- Central-Asia Forum / Towards to Alma-Ata+30
- Europe Forum / 26 years After the Sofia Declaration
- Latin American and Caribbean Forum / 26 Years After Santiago Declaration
"I’m really looking forward to seeing how this excellent new initiative of advocating for more transparency from internet companies unfolds, because it’s much needed.”

Nick Clegg, Facebook’s Vice-President for Global Affairs and Communications.

"This partnership gives us an opportunity to really move forward on some crucial initiatives.”

Peggy Hicks, Director, Special Procedures and Right to Development, OHCHR

"It is in the spirit of Windhoek, that we are determined to reinforce the safeguards of a free, independent and pluralistic media […]"

Joint Statement by the Groups of Friends on the Safety of Journalists on World Press Freedom Day 2021


The Issue Brief highlights 26 principles to enhance the transparency of internet platforms and discusses different aspects of transparency including regulatory approaches and social responsibility initiatives. It was released at the Plenary on Transparency of Online Platforms, opened with a dialogue with David Kaye, former UN Special Rapporteur for freedom of expression and opinion and current Chair of the Board of the Global Network Initiative, and Nick Clegg, Facebook’s Vice-President for Global Affairs and Communications.

Launch of the Global Drive for Media Freedom and Safety of Journalists

The Global Drive is an initiative supported by the Kingdom of the Netherlands and implemented by OHCHR and UNESCO.

It follows the announcement by Dutch Foreign Minister, Stef Blok, during the 2020 World Press Freedom Day Conference about the Netherlands’s donation of €7 million to promote media freedom and the safety of journalists worldwide, in the wake of The Hague Commitment signed by more than 50 ministers.


The chairs and members of the five Groups of Friends on the Safety of Journalists at UNESCO in Paris, at the UN in New York and Geneva, at the OSCE in Vienna and at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg joined forces to issue a statement on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day.

A total of 45 Member States co-signed the statement.
Conference Highlights

The **Global Opening Ceremony** took place in the presence of Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director-General, and Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Prime Minister of Namibia, on 2 May. The event also featured video messages from António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Ministers of Foreign Affairs from the Netherlands, Austria, Canada, Lithuania, and the United Kingdom, as well as the European Union’s Special Representative for Human Rights.
The “Opening Talk Show: Is Information a Public Good?”, one of the main segments of this year’s conference, kicked off with a dialogue on information as a public good between Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel laureate and Miranda Johnson, Deputy Executive Editor, The Economist. The panel gathered experts from leading media, civil society, and journalists’ associations to exchange views on journalism sustainability at a time when the current economic crisis is forcing closures and journalistic job cuts and increasing political capture of media outlets. The session was held on 2 May, moderated by the Conference Champions and Masters of Ceremonies, Gwen Lister, co-chair of the 1991 Windhoek Seminar, and Toivo Ndjebela, Managing Editor of the Namibian Sun.
Plenary on Media Viability

A dialogue between Zukiswa Potye, CEO, South African Media Development and Diversity Agency and Rod Sims, Chair of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) opened the Plenary on Media Viability on 30 April, with speakers calling for immediate action to support media sustainability including through public and fiscal measures in favour of media enterprises; revenue sharing mechanisms to ensure media are adequately compensated for third party use of their content; increasing development assistance to media; collaboration among media; and support for non-profit media.

Plenary on Transparency of Online Platforms

The Plenary on Transparency of Online Platforms took place on 2 May with a ‘setting the scene dialogue’ between Nick Clegg, Vice-President for Global Affairs and Communications, Facebook, and David Kaye, Chair Board of Directors, Global Network Initiative (GNI). The dialogue was followed by a panel with leading internet experts to discuss initiatives on regulation for transparency requirements of internet companies, and other international and collaborative initiatives for online platform transparency at a time of a heated debate on the impact of internet companies in economic, social and political life, and their role in shaping the communications landscape.

Plenary on Media and Information Literacy

A plenary on Media and Information Literacy (MIL) discussed local and international initiatives to boost people’s competencies so that everyone can recognize and cherish information. This plenary was held right after the proclamation by the UN General Assembly of UNESCO-initiated MIL Week and in the lead up to its global celebration to be hosted in South Africa.
Partner’s Day

1 May, ‘Partners Day’, was a day to listen to inspiring stories from individuals making a difference on freedom of expression, and it was marked by the #PressFreedom Watch Party at Windhoek’s Zoo Park, the ‘Recite and Take Action’ Festival with journalists and writers reading favourite pages about stories making a difference in the defence of press freedom, the screening of the World Press Freedom Voices, short video submissions from the community of World Press Freedom Day participants. The day also included a tribute session to journalists who have died from Covid-19 organised by the International Federation of Journalists.

Coalition’s Day

The Coalitions Day on 29 May included over 15 sessions organized by media coalitions and organizations, including Cartooning for Peace; Free Press Unlimited; the Freedom Online Coalition; BBC Media Action; the Forum on Information and Democracy; Dynamic Coalition on the Sustainability of Journalism and News Media; the Civil Society Coalition on Safety of Journalists; the High Level Legal Panel; the Media Freedom Coalition, and the Center for Law and Democracy.

Rewatch the Sessions:
- Press Cartoons: A Tool for Media and Information Literacy
- Emergency Measures to Support Media Hit by Covid-19
- Is Independent Media a Public Good and is Public Subsidy to Support it Realistic?
- Promoting Freedom Online: Tackling Online Disinformation
- Information & Democracy: Developing Concrete Recommendations for the Sustainability of Journalism
- Journalism, Tech Platforms, and the Future of Media Policy
- Windhoek Declaration and the Safety of Journalists: Past, Present and Future
- The Challenges Ahead: Perspectives from the High-Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom
- The Role of Governments in Protecting Media Freedom: What More can the Media Freedom Coalition Do?
- Realising the Potential of Think Tanks in Striking a Balance Between Freedom
The Academic Conference

Co-organized by the University of Namibia (UNAM) and UNESCO, the 6th Academic Conference on the Safety of Journalists saw the participation of researchers from around the world who presented 14 papers. The papers covered policy-relevant and current topics such as safety of journalists and the COVID-19 pandemic, gender-based violence against journalists and methodological advancements in monitoring safety. Within the framework of the Academic Conference, the Journalism Safety Research Network (JSRN) organized the first event in a series of knowledge exchange sessions with the purpose of connecting academics and civil-society representatives on the topic of safety of journalists.

Re-watch the Academic Conference

The Youth Newsroom

The 2021 edition of Youth Newsroom brought 16 young journalism practitioners and students from Namibia and other Southern African countries to Windhoek while engaging 10 online participants from Europe, Asia and Latin America. During the course of World Press Freedom Conference 2021, participants were given training sessions by Namibia University of Science and Technology on journalistic ethics, photoshop, video editing and briefing of the conference programme. On 3rd May, the last day of the conference, UNESCO Director General, Ms. Audrey Azoulay paid visit to Youth Newsroom to interact with the young reporters. Over 20 news articles on media freedom, gender-based violence, investigative journalism and other topics were generated in various formats. Articles could be found on the youth Newsroom website at www.youthnewsroom.org.
Booths and Cinema section:

Registrants to the Conference online platform accessed to stream online PBS’ Frontline award-winning documentary *The Facebook Dilemma* at the Cinema section and visit booths from Cartooning for Peace, the Namibian Tourism Board and a booth with commemorative materials on the 30th anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration set up by UNESCO.

Artistic Performances

The global conference featured Namibian musical and artistic talents including violinist Ronaldo Kandume from the Namibian National Symphony Orchestra; seasoned, and dedicated singer/songwriter and actress, Diolini; Namibia’s most celebrated guitarist, Jackson Wahengo; saxophonist, composer, and educator Suzy Eises; and one of Namibia’s musical icons, Venaune Kandukira, better known by his stage name Big Ben.

World Press Freedom Day celebrations around the world

Over 100 events took place around the world in more than thirty countries to mark the World Press Freedom Day celebration, among them Myanmar, where journalists and media workers have become victims of escalating violence since the military took power in Feb 2021. Other celebrations include Uganda discussing media freedom in the context of hybrid regimes, elections and Covid-19, and Iraq’s event shed light on violations of journalists.
UNESCO launched on 3 May the global media campaign #QuestionsThatMatter, developed by DDB, to recognize the reliable and accurate information that journalists provide. Among newspapers that printed the campaign ads on 3 May were The New York Times, Le Monde, The Guardian, Globe and Mail, Los Angeles Times, and Liberation. The campaign main message “When journalists can’t ask, we can’t ask” was relayed by on social media by New Yorker, NPR, Washington Post, NBC, Aristegui Noticias, Rappler, among others.
Other Partnerships

UNESCO and Cartooning for Peace launched for the fifth consecutive edition a joint digital campaign this year named ‘cartooning for #WorldPressFreedomDay’. Inspired by 2021 theme “Information as a Public Good”, the 10 selected cartoons focused on defending and cherishing journalism and the verified information that journalists provide and were shared by influential journalists and partners worldwide.

See the cartoons

World Press Photo opened its exhibition ‘People Power’ in Paris at the Cité internationale universitaire. The exhibition was curated in collaboration with UNESCO and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the 2020 World Press Freedom Conference in the Hague.

Twitter launched its campaign #FollowLocalJournalists to celebrate World Press Freedom Day and encourage news consumers, journalism advocacy organizations and reporters to share impactful examples of local journalism. Twitter also continued its partnership with UNESCO to help drive conversation around World Press Freedom Day and created special emojis for #FollowLocalJournalists, #PressFreedom, #WorldPressFreedomDay and #WPFD2021 in 20 languages. Twitter also organized Twitter Spaces around the world where people was able to hear directly from journalists about the issues facing their industry, including one discussion in the Philippines with journalists from Rappler, which was inspired by UNESCO’s campaign message “When journalists can’t ask, we can’t act.” Twitter also provided trainings and Ads for good grants to non-profit press freedom organizations.

Read more

The graphic design platform Canva joined the Day’s celebrations with dedicated templates and video messages for UNESCO’s World Press Freedom Voices.
Media

Press releases published by UNESCO
• 26/04/2021 - 2021 World Press Freedom to promote Information as a Public Good in a severely challenged media landscape
• 27/04/2021 - World Press Freedom Day: Philippines journalist Maria Ressa to receive 2021 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize

Joint Op-ed
• Joint op-ed by Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, Maria Ressa, and Gwen Lister

News articles published by UNESCO
• 01/04/2021 - 2021 World Press Freedom Day Global Conference
• 16/04/2021 - Leading Minds Reflecting on Information as a Public Good to Participate in World Press Freedom Conference in Windhoek
• 03/05/2021 - UNESCO initiates global dialogue to enhance the transparency of internet companies, with release of illustrative high-level principles
• 03/05/2021 - Media Viability: a Pillar of Information as a Public Good
• 04/05/2021 - UNESCO releases pioneering discussion paper on online violence against women journalists
• 06/05/2021 - Windhoek+30 Declaration calls for affirming information is a public good

Media coverage

Social Media
• An analysis report by the University of South Carolina’ Social Media Insights Lab registered 463K mentions of World Press Freedom Day (in all 6 UN official languages) on social media. The official Day hashtag #WorldPressFreedomDay was the top hashtag of sample taken from May 2 – 4, 2021, used in more than 150k tweets.
• Mentions broken down by language: French (3k mentions); Spanish (23k mentions); Arabic (1.5k mentions); Russian (almost 400 mentions); Chinese (1.6k mentions)

Video Highlights
Re-watch all sessions in UNESCO's YouTube Channel / Wrap-Up Session / Regional Forums