

Message on the Occasion of World Press Freedom Day

UN Headquarters , New York, 3 May 2009

As one of the few General Assembly presidents who has received an advanced degree in journalism, I believe it is a proud profession, one that demands vision, precision, courage and compassion. I would add the importance of ethics and social responsibility in our profession. The freedom of journalists around the world to report through all available media is a bedrock of modern societies and the life blood for informed decision-making, forming enlightened opinions and policy-making. We must defend this right and, like all rights, extend press freedom at every opportunity.

This is all the more true when our societies are overwhelmed with news and information about the crises that we face in our families and communities, as well as at the national and international level. It is ironic, that despite the wealth of information available to many of us, we are starved for information that we can trust. This problem is true even in developed countries. Information is powerful tool that can guide all of us in understanding an increasingly complex world; and that can provide insights into problems that set the stage for their solutions.

One of the most troubling aspects of the current economic turmoil the world is facing is the erosion of trust. Just as our economies are affected by lack of confidence and trust, so too the transmission of news, information and analysis requires that people trust their sources. In journalism, this is a sacred trust – and it is too often broken. Trust ensures journalists access to information and that their responsible reporting inspires the trust and confidence of their audiences as well.

I would encourage journalists to develop their own frameworks for more comprehensive and holistic reporting; a conceptual model that grapples with the normative, ethical, political dimensions of these challenges and that examines how science, new knowledge and emerging human rights law meet the needs of the most vulnerable.

Let us take the opportunity presented by World Press Freedom Day to reflect on the ethics and responsibilities of a free press. The successful resolution of the many challenges we face requires news media, journalists and reporters who inspire our trust; who challenge conventional wisdom; who search for answers that ensure the common good; who seek to unite rather than divide people. Our defense of world press freedom is greatly strengthened when these elements are a central part of our media institutions and individuals and the public perception of them.

[Back to Top](#)