



**WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2021**

# **INFORMATION AS A PUBLIC GOOD**

30 YEARS OF THE WINDHOEK DECLARATION

“Information is a public good. [...] and as a public good, it needs public support.”  
**Joseph E. Stiglitz**

(Message for the 40th Anniversary of the UNESCO’s International Programme for the Development of Communication, 24 November 2020)

## **Executive summary**

World Press Freedom Day has its origins in a UNESCO conference in Windhoek, Namibia in 1991. The 2021 global event returns World Press Freedom Day to its roots, focusing on contemporary issues for freedom of expression, access to information and the public service role of journalism within the changed communications ecosystem.

In advocating the notion of “information as a public good”, WPF 2021 highlights the important difference between information and other kinds of communications content such as disinformation, hate speech, entertainment and data. The aim is to draw attention to the special role of journalism in producing news as verified information in the public interest, and to how this depends on a wider ecosystem which enables information as a public good.

In particular, the 2021 WPF 2021 will highlight three imperatives for this ecosystem:

- Steps to ensure the economic viability of news media;
- Mechanisms for ensuring transparency of Internet companies; and
- Enhanced media and information literacy capacities that enable people to recognize and value, as well as defend and demand, journalism as a vital part of information as a public good.



Participants at the UNESCO seminar  
“Promoting an Independent and  
Pluralistic African Media” held in  
Windhoek, Namibia in 1991.  
Photo credit: The Namibian

# Background and changes

On 3 May 1991, signatories of the historic Windhoek Declaration for the Development of a Free, Independent and Pluralistic Press stated in Article V that:

“The worldwide trend towards democracy and freedom of information and expression is a fundamental contribution to the fulfillment of human aspirations.”

The point underlines the interlinked roles of these fundamental freedoms for the advancement of the public good of humankind.

While the 1991 Windhoek conference focused on print media, the 10th anniversary in 2001 highlighted communications through the airwaves, giving rise to the African Charter on Broadcasting. In 2011, for the 20th anniversary, UNESCO supported a conference which put the focus on people's right to seek and receive information, which culminated in 2019 in the UN's recognition of 28 September as the International Day for Universal Access to Information.

In 2021, the current context requires an interrogation of the information environment as a step towards identifying what conditions are needed for communications that favour the UN Sustainable Development aspiration to advance "public access to information and fundamental freedoms".

First, there has been a rise of pluralistic media environments in most countries of the world, thanks to national liberalization and expansion of transnational media via satellite or subscription. Nonetheless, many news media outlets are facing substantial economic challenges today.

Secondly, it is evident that significant technological advances have increased the opportunities for people to communicate and access information. At the same time, major digital divides remain between genders, and between and within regions and countries. A handful of internet companies provide billions of users across the world with communications services, but are also criticised for enabling hate and disinformation rather than journalism, as well as for weak transparency and accountability on how they use their gatekeeping power.

A third change since 1991 has been increased legal recognition of the right to access to information. While in 1991 only 12 countries were equipped with laws guaranteeing the rights of citizens to access government information<sup>1</sup>, this number rose to 40 countries in 2009, culminating in 126 countries in 2019<sup>2</sup>. Besides the availability of official information, free and independent journalism is a major factor in producing information for the service of humanity.

Putting together these three developments, the result today is a proliferation of information that co-exists with many other types of content in an increasingly digital communications sphere, including the challenges of disinformation and hate speech. The production of local information, such as local news, is under great stress. At the same time, humanity faces a confusing abundance of content that drowns out even those facts that are produced and circulated at both global and local levels.

1 <http://www.freedominfo.org/?p=18223>

2 UNESCO. 2019. Access to information: a new promise for sustainable development. In-Focus Series | World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000371485>



Photo credit: Shutterstock

# Information as a public good

**In this context, it is timely to recognize and promote the conception of information as a public good – as something that helps to advance collective aspirations and which forms the key building block for knowledge.**

Especially in digital form, a fact ‘consumed’ by one person does not prevent others from also ‘consuming’ it. Information is inherently non-exclusive, although many factors create artificial restrictions – whether these be paywalls, copyright, official and corporate secrecy, and direct censorship. Information also has positive externalities, or positive spillovers<sup>3</sup>. As a public good with potential for universal reach, information allows us to know our rights and prerogatives, as well as contributes to the general interest, at the service of sustainable development.

The importance of freely accessing reliable information, particularly through journalism, has been demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic: in times of crisis such as this, information can be a matter of life or death. This has been especially

<sup>3</sup> <https://promarket.org/2017/06/30/information-public-good/>

true in the face of the COVID-19 'disinfodemic', a mixture of misinformation and disinformation that has spread across the world sowing confusion, discord and division. The lack of publicly available reliable data and information has created a vacuum for potentially harmful content (including hate speech) and misleading conspiracy theories, mostly spread online through Internet business models and actors who exploit these.

The COVID-19 public health crisis has shed light on the vital role played by free and independent media worldwide<sup>4</sup>. The output of news media (be it in print, television or radio, analogue or delivered via digital platforms) remains a powerful source of information that people access, even when this is via social media networks. In this way, media workers everywhere have significantly contributed to our understanding of the pandemic by making overwhelming and highly complex flows of information more accessible, making scientific facts understandable to the broader public, providing regularly updated data, and engaging in fact-checking. In many countries, journalists and fact-checkers have critically monitored contracting and subsidies that respond to the pandemic and have faced pressure from authorities as a result. In other cases, they have been hampered by measures put in place to contain the virus as well as challenges from both police and public during the host of public protests that have characterized this period.

## Current challenges

In the midst of this, three underlying trends are worth identifying:

- **Pre-existing challenges to the viability of the news media have significantly worsened.** Already hit by competition from Internet companies, media outlets' economic models were further afflicted by massive losses of advertising revenue due to the economic impact of the public health crisis. When the economic independence of the media is in jeopardy, so is their editorial independence: in times of economic uncertainty, they are more vulnerable to take-overs from governments, media barons and to interferences by advertisers<sup>5</sup>, thereby threatening editorial integrity and independent media's role as a public service<sup>6</sup>.
- **Internet companies, such as social media, messaging and search companies,** continue to be criticized for making profits out of flows of content that relay astounding volumes of disinformation (and other content that is potentially harmful to human rights), including within the context of the pandemic<sup>7</sup>. The availability of journalism is increasingly mediated by these companies, but without them prioritizing its distinctiveness and importance within the wider content mix. The functioning of these business entities remains opaque, which inhibits stakeholders from developing informed policy responses.
- In these times of **unprecedented flows of information and disinformation, alongside flows of entertainment, data, and other kinds of content,** people risk being confused or manipulated, particularly by algorithmic personalized targeting. It is critical for citizens everywhere to develop and reinforce their Media and

4 UNESCO. Journalism, press freedom and COVID-19. Issue brief in the World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development series. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373573?posInSet=1&queryId=0216815c-9a38-457c-8e20-b224c-31b03e5>

5 UNESCO. 2020. World Press Freedom Day 2020 Concept Note [https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/concept\\_note\\_wpf2020\\_final](https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/concept_note_wpf2020_final).

6 UNESCO. 2020. Reporting Facts: Free From Fear or Favour. Issue brief in the World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development series. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000375061>

7 UNESCO. 2020. World trends in freedom of expression and media development: issue brief - Journalism, press freedom and COVID-19 <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373573.locale=en>

Information Literacy (MIL) skills, in order to make informed judgments and decisions, and critically engage in sustainable development for which information as a public good is indispensable. Equally important is citizens' knowledge of their own rights to freedom of expression and the importance of the role of journalists for the production of reliable information. MIL needs to include appreciation of safety of journalists, including especially women journalists, and awareness-raising about the need to defend and demand journalism in the public interest. In recognizing these audience-related aspects, World Press Freedom Day 2021 will feed into Global Media and Information Literacy Week in October 2021 to further develop this dimension.

## Summary

On the 30th anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration, the historic connection made between the freedom to seek, impart and receive information and the public good remains as relevant as it was at the time of its signing. The theme of "Windhoek 2021: Promoting Information as a Public Good" serves as a call to renew the global commitment to freedom of expression, press freedom, and freedom of information, while acknowledging the new economic challenges faced by the media sector, the gatekeeping role of internet companies and their need for greater transparency, as well as the strong need for Media and Information Literacy capacities to be strengthened worldwide.

Promoting information as a public good is necessary to 'build back better' in the post-COVID world. It is a value that strongly supports with the UN Sustainable Development aspiration to advance "public access to information and fundamental freedoms" (SDG 16.10). And it constitutes the new normative context to highlight free, pluralistic and independent journalism as a springboard for progress.

**#WorldPressFreedomDay**  
**#PressFreedom**

[en.unesco.org/commemorations/worldpressfreedomday](https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/worldpressfreedomday)

# Appendix

## Insights on information as a public good

The link between information and public good is, in the words of Nobel Prizewinner Joseph E. Stiglitz. “One of the important insights of modern economics - and as a public good, it needs public support,”<sup>8</sup> he said. “Good information is necessary for the functioning of a strong democratic state,” he continued, and added: “in democracies we know what needs to be done, and we actually have the ability to do it: we need to strengthen the free and diverse media with public support.”

These observations help to explain further how information as a public good is vital for ensuring “public participation and civic space”, identified as a priority area by the UN Secretary-General’s Call to Action for Human Rights, launched on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. They also help provide context for what it takes to deepen the role of journalism in countering the pandemic, promoting inclusion, awareness-raising about climate change, and the wider Sustainable Development agenda.

To promote an ecosystem where journalism can flourish as part of information as a public good, WPF2021 identifies three key conditions that need to be put in place: media viability, transparency of online platforms, and media and information literacy.

## 1. Developing the viability of the media and strengthening their role in the production and sharing of information

In an environment that is increasingly competitive and that is simultaneously affected by the internet giants, the COVID-19 public health crisis and its accompanying economic recessions, the viability of media remains a major challenge for information to serve as a public good, both from an economic point of view and in broader terms. In recent years, advertisement revenues have shifted from legacy media to online platforms, public service broadcasting has been subject to increasing budgetary cuts, and consumers’ willingness to pay for quality media content has (with few exceptions) decreased due to pandemic-caused poverty, as well as the incorrect assumption that quality journalism can be accessed free-of-charge (a situation, however, that often does not apply when assessing whether free offerings are genuinely independent journalism, and also does not generally apply to the availability of local news in local languages). Impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, global entertainment and media revenue fell by 6% in 2020, while digital consumption grew, strengthening the shift towards online media.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> 24 November 2020: message for the 40th Anniversary of the UNESCO’s International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gzA0EVKrduE>  
<sup>9</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/01/video-streaming-was-a-hit-during-covid-19-but-what-does-that-mean-for-media/>

While journalists and media workers play a crucial role in the production and sharing of quality and reliable information, thereby contributing to the free flow of information and ideas, they are increasingly working under precarious conditions, especially freelancers. This context increases the risk of media being captured by different powers: political, economic, religious, ideological.

However, the COVID-19 crisis has placed journalists and quality journalism and public interest media once again at the center of the global discourse. Reporting on the crisis, through initiatives such as the popularization of scientific facts, the compilation and frequent updating of data, fact-checking or monitoring spending, has proved vital, albeit demanding for media companies worldwide, at a time when many are faced with economic uncertainty and potential extinction due to blows to their business models and drastic losses in revenue.

As defined by UNESCO's Media Viability Indicators, media viability "requires that the overall economic and business environment provide conditions conducive for independent media operations by providing economic stability, fostering the ability of the public to consume media, and providing resources necessary for viability."<sup>10</sup> When these conditions are not met, as well as when fundamental preconditions such as safety of journalists are lacking, media organizations are in peril of being captured and manipulated by the narrow interests of public and private actors, which would make the information they produce and share lose its nature and value as a public good.<sup>11</sup>

Reinforcing the viability of the media to ensure their survival is therefore imperative to counter this risk of appropriation and manipulation of information, if not the extinction of public interest media. The independence of the media and the preservation of its contribution to information as a public good also has implications for the proper running of democratic societies. It is particularly important in times of elections, public health crises, conflicts and natural disasters, and to the fight against hate speech (and other types of potentially harmful content) and efforts to debunk disinformation. A range of policy measures are needed, alongside innovation within news media institutions, to address market failure to provide for sustainable journalism. Where these involve public resources in diverse forms, strong safeguards are needed to ensure that external support cannot serve as a tool to reward some outlets and penalize others at the expense of a fair and pluralistic media dispensation.

## **2. Reinforcing the transparency of online platforms, an essential pillar for information to remain a public good**

As the digital transformation continues to profoundly alter our communication habits, social media and other online platforms, such as messaging and search engine services, have grown to occupy an increasingly large part in our daily communications. Yet, due to their general opacity, we remain largely ignorant of their inner workings, the functioning of their algorithms and the anonymized data

<sup>10</sup> UNESCO – IPDC Media Viability Indicators [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/IPDC/ipdc59\\_Media\\_viability\\_indicators.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/IPDC/ipdc59_Media_viability_indicators.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> UNESCO. 2020. Reporting facts: free from fear or favour: preview of In Focus report on World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373572>



that could offer concrete information about the flow of problematic content, such as disinformation or hate speech.

In addition, many of these online platforms have fueled disinformation and hate speech to spread at an unprecedented scale and speed. Their business models, which are designed to seize and retain the attention of their users in order to gather data for targeted advertising, have made these companies susceptible to amplifying disinformation by default, including through their enabling of micro-targeted advertisements.<sup>12</sup> This is why there is criticism that the companies are making money off content that risks harm to human rights.<sup>13</sup>

The internet companies have in recent years been a vector of electoral disinformation. For example, several independent researchers have found evidence that WhatsApp, a Facebook-owned messaging app, had been used to massively spread disinformation often favoring one candidate over others or a particular choice in a referendum.<sup>14,15</sup> In fear of their platforms being manipulated in a similar fashion, in the past years several social media companies have announced new measures to combat misinformation, disinformation, electoral interference and the spreading of conspiracy theories, but news reports continuously show shortfalls in application.<sup>16,17</sup> Most recently such measures have led to the unprecedented ban/restrictions of an in-office President's account, raising questions from experts and G7's prime ministers.

In some of the worst cases, digital platforms have been used to relay hate speech, at times with sinister consequences. A UN Fact-Finding Mission in Myanmar found that the role of social media has been significant in spreading hate speech against the Rohingya community and other Muslims.<sup>18</sup> In its human rights impact assessment of Facebook's presence in Myanmar, BSR similarly finds that "A minority of users is seeking to use Facebook as a platform to undermine democracy and incite offline violence, including serious crimes under international law".<sup>19</sup>

Several internet companies have taken measures to deprioritise or otherwise counter disinformation and potentially harmful content such as, inter-alia, refining community standards, strengthening content moderation (by the removal, labelling or de-amplifying of misleading content), changing their advertising policies, delisting certain content producers accused of co-ordinated and authentic activities, re-engineering what is pushed as "recommended", directing users towards verified content, or partnering and supporting fact-checking initiatives. Nevertheless, in the absence of comprehensive data, information, statistics from these online companies, assessing the proportion of disinformation and hate speech in relation to the total volumes of content, as well as its origins and reach, and the effectiveness of measures to counter such content, is an impossible task.

In addition, the extent of the spreading of false information before being identified and the role of "super spreaders" is not made public by these platforms.<sup>20</sup>

12 For example, Shoshana Zuboff, The coup we are not talking about. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/29/opinion/sunday/facebook-surveillance-society-technology.html>

13 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/19/technology/whatsapp-brazil-presidential-election.html>

14 [https://ico.org.uk/media/action-weve-taken/2618383/20201002\\_ico-o-ed-l-rtl-0181\\_to-julian-knight-mp.pdf](https://ico.org.uk/media/action-weve-taken/2618383/20201002_ico-o-ed-l-rtl-0181_to-julian-knight-mp.pdf)

15 <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/combating-misinformation-and-election-interference-on-tiktok>

16 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/isabeltogoh/2020/10/19/tiktok-is-banning-accounts-that-spread-qanon-theories-and-disinformation/?sh=413d446b2262>

17 [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/FFM-Myanmar/A\\_HRC\\_39\\_64.docx](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/FFM-Myanmar/A_HRC_39_64.docx)

18 [https://about.fb.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/bsr-facebook-myanmar-hria\\_final.pdf](https://about.fb.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/bsr-facebook-myanmar-hria_final.pdf)

19 [https://about.fb.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/bsr-facebook-myanmar-hria\\_final.pdf](https://about.fb.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/bsr-facebook-myanmar-hria_final.pdf)

20 UNESCO. 2020. World trends in freedom of expression and media development: issue brief - Journalism, press freedom and COVID-19 <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373573.locale=en>

Meanwhile, the content produced and shared by news media are generally treated as just any other content, meaning that journalism is not elevated as a unique source for information within the mix that is availed by the internet companies.

Transparency has become a buzzword in the field of digital technology. Enhanced transparency in various aspects of internet companies would make it possible for external stakeholders to gain insight into the workings of the companies (and their potential impact), in contrast to the current relevant opacity of their operations. Given the status of these mega-institutions with their particular business models and significance for public life, a strong case can be made from the point of view of external stakeholders to promote greater transparency.

Currently, companies have legal, voluntary and ethical obligations that are relevant to transparency, for example in the UN's Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (Ruggie Principles) and the UN Global Compact. There are intertwined rights and balances to be struck of course, for example with the protection of privacy, or the right to intellectual property (in this case, commercial secrets). However, this balance merits being explored – as with other companies – with a view to possible changes.

A lack of implementation of international human rights standards in the digital space and the very nature of these platforms as transnational companies further hinders accountability for any damage caused to the communications ecosystem. In that regard, transparency is also vital regarding internet companies' decisions on taking action on content and suspend accounts, as well as their procedures to process appeals from users not satisfied with their decisions. In the face of the rise of disinformation and online hate speech, promoting transparency and fostering dialogue is essential for multi-stakeholder governance within the internet environment.

The transparency of these online platforms would in itself constitute a sharing of information as a public good, by making available data that is not yet in the public realm – both proactively and on demand. Efforts to enhance transparency must not compromise the principles of personal data protection and privacy. Such a step would not necessarily fetter proprietary software but it could promote open-source and inter-operable alternatives, as well as go hand in hand with advocating for a use of artificial intelligence that is ethical and in line with human rights standards, which is a current concern of UNESCO Member States in the development of a Recommendation on the ethics of AI.

Furthermore, disinformation and hate speech are too complex and challenging phenomena to be handled by single companies or States alone; they also requires close collaboration between a variety of stakeholders, among which academia, civil society, fact-checking initiatives, and the media industry.<sup>21</sup> The idea of transparency is integral to UNESCO's concept of Internet Universality and the framework of Rights, Openness, Accessibility and Multistakeholder governance (ROAM).<sup>22</sup> Without transparency of how human Rights are being respected online through curation and moderation, abuses and violations can take place without knowledge or redress. A digital ecology that is not Open to all entrants, can lead to hidden dominance and unforeseen data flows and use, and conceal algorithmic outcomes

21 Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development. 2020. Balancing Act: Countering Digital Disinformation While Respecting Freedom of Expression [https://broadbandcommission.org/Documents/working-groups/FoE\\_Disinfo\\_Report.pdf](https://broadbandcommission.org/Documents/working-groups/FoE_Disinfo_Report.pdf)

22 UNESCO's Internet Universality Indicators are a set of 303 indicators that aim to assess the state of Internet development at the national level according to the ROAM principles of human Rights, Openness, Accessibility, Multi-stakeholder participation <https://en.unesco.org/internet-universality-indicators/roamx-indicators>

that have negative potential for human rights. In order to ensure Accessibility, transparency is needed as a factor for terms of service and pricing policies, and for the public to be empowered with knowledge of the digital environment, such as “free services”, disinformation actors and counter-measures, etc. Multi-stakeholder Governance issues, ranging from decisions on values through to regulations, depend on the degree to which there is transparency of process and participants, as well as accountability mechanisms.

### **3. Strengthening Media and Information Literacy capacities in times of disinformation and hate speech**

To value, protect and promote information as a public good, the demand side of media and digital communications are crucial in the equation. This means empowering citizens through sustainable media and information literacy policies and strategies. Developing media and information literacy also offers a long-term and systemic policy response to disinformation and hate speech. It calls for public policies at the national<sup>23</sup> and institutional<sup>24</sup> levels thus responding to UNESCO’s reflection on the “Futures of Education.” MIL provides one dimension of how education might be re-thought in a complex world. It forms part of new visions and strategies for freedom of expression, access to information and education policy and practices.

The content that we engage and interact with can influence what we think is important, and even our beliefs and attitudes. It informs our daily decisions, from the most commonplace to the most critical. However, inexorable waves of information, disinformation, hate speech, and polarized narratives makes for confusion about what to trust. In this, identifying sources, disentangling the messages with which we are engaging, and discerning quality information and reliable facts from falsehoods and manipulation has become an arduous task.

What we share, like or recommend to each other is often a result of our feelings rather than conscious and critical thinking or concern about possible human rights and development implications. In the face of this, Media and Information Literacy (MIL) appears as an essential tool set which cuts across educational, cultural and social contexts. This growing body of knowledge, values and skills is embodied in a range of competencies. For example, MIL spans capacities “from finding and evaluating the credibility of online information, through to how to react to attempts to shape young people’s identities by social media and advertising”.<sup>25</sup> MIL encompasses knowledge about the significance of the right to privacy in the digital age, as well as interactions with talk radio, online etiquette and intercultural respect”. Furthermore, MIL “empowers people to be curious, to understand their information needs, to search, to critically evaluate, to use and to contribute information and media content wisely. MIL calls for competence in knowing one’s rights online; combating online hate speech and cyberbullying; and understanding the ethical issues surrounding access and use of Information”.<sup>26</sup>

If information is to play its part as a public good, MIL competencies - as part of ongoing learning - can help people to navigate and make sense of current times. Strengthening of these competencies can only be best achieved if all concerned

24 UNESCO. 2019. Media and Information Literacy in Journalism: A Handbook for Journalists and Journalism Educators, [https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/mil\\_eng.pdf](https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/mil_eng.pdf)

25 UNESCO. 2015. MILID Yearbook. Media and information literacy for the Sustainable Development Goals. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000234657.locale=en>

26 UNESCO. 2016. MILID Yearbook. Media and information literacy: reinforcing human rights, countering radicalization and extremism <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000246371.locale=en>

stakeholders, including governments, educators, media and Internet companies, among others, are mobilised to work within their spheres of operation to develop and implement appropriate MIL policies and strategies to help citizens develop a critical attitude towards interaction with information, thus contributing to the vision of information as a public good. A media and information literate citizenry then becomes a necessary node in the business model for viable and transparent media and digital communication companies, thus contributing to the sustainable development goals.

In particular, MIL has a key role to play in raising competencies about issues of press freedom and journalistic safety. If the audiences for news are unable to recognize journalism, or where they discount its worth, this undercuts the rationale of conceiving information as a public good. Conversely, where citizens can demand professional performance from news journalists, and can join in defending reporters from attacks, informational resilience is increased. Promoting the understanding of gender dimensions of harassment of journalists is equally an important role for MIL.

## Conclusion

The theme for World Press Freedom Day 2021 is of urgent relevance to all countries across the world. It recognises the changing communications system that is impacting on our health, our human rights, democracies and sustainable development. To underline the importance of information within this new ecosystem, it is important to address current issues of media viability, platform transparency, and user literacy and capacity.

Awareness of the interdependence of these factors within the bigger picture is a step towards an improved information ecology. Such awareness is a prelude to potential changes in policy, regulation, self-regulation, multi-stakeholder governance, education and informed public participation. Information is an entitlement of each individual, but its availability, prominence and recognition is a common concern. This is why 3 May 2021 is a chance to affirm the importance of cherishing information as a public good, and exploring what can be done in the production, distribution and reception of content to strengthen journalism, and to advance transparency and empowerment while leaving no one behind.