

REMARKS BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL, UGANDA NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO (UNATCOM) ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY TO END IMPUNITY FOR CRIMES AGAINST JOURNALISTS, 2ND NOVEMBER, 2021

Your Excellence the EU Ambassador to Uganda,

Representatives of Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies present,

The Executive Director, Uganda Media Women's Association- our distinguished partner in this activity

Members of Civil Society organizations in the Field of Media Development

All our distinguished participants in your various capacities

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour and pleasure to be here today in this high-level dialogue designed to mark the International Day to End Impunity for crimes against Journalists.

On behalf of Uganda National Commission for UNESCO, we are so grateful to you all, first; having honoured the invitation to be present here today in spite of your very busy schedules and the challenges and the fear Covid19 pandemic has caused in the general population.

I take this opportunity to convey my sincere thanks to the EU Delegation for this partnership in organizing this activity to mark this Day for impunity. Without this partnership perhaps we would not be here to mark this day. Special mention goes to Gilbert Cathal, Gyezaho Emmanuel, Bwongerwa Timothy and Letaru Prudence on the side of the EU Delegation ; Dominic Mundrugo- Ogo and Daniel Kaweesi on the side of Uganda National Commission for UNESCO. Thank you so much for doing excellence preparation.

UNESCO as you may be aware is a specialized agency of the United Nations founded in 1945 to contribute to the construction of peace, human development and dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information. UNESCO's contribution to world peace and development is based on its five functions: Laboratory of ideas and foresight, Standard setter, clearing house, Capacity-building and as Catalyst of International cooperation

You may also be aware, that the National Commissions for UNESCO (NATCOMs) are established in accordance with Article VII of the UNESCO

Constitution, are the interface of UNESCO with Member States at the national level to assist government Ministries, Departments, Agencies, Institutions, Individuals, Community Based Organizations, and NGOs in developing their plans and projects in line with the UNESCO's guidelines and programme framework.

UNESCO's Fields of competence are Four (4) namely Education, Science, Culture and Communication & Information. The strategic Objective under Communication & Information is Promoting freedom of expression, media development, and access to information and knowledge.

Strategically, under Communication and Information programme, UNATCOM strives to strengthen the national capacity to protect and promote freedom of expression – inclusive of press freedom; universal access to information and knowledge and safety of all media workers . In this regard, we have been able to train journalists on issues related to objective reporting in many aspects including elections, promotion of freedom of expression, local content development as well as promotion of a safety mechanism for media workers as per the UN Plan of Action for the Safety of Journalists and the issue of impunity

Ladies and Gentlemen, The International Day to end Impunity was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 2013 in recognition of the far-reaching consequences of impunity, especially of crimes against journalists. The Resolution adopted at its 68th session urged Member States to implement definite measures countering the present culture of impunity. The resolution condemns all attacks and violence against journalists and media workers. It also urges Member States to do their utmost to prevent violence against journalists and media workers, to ensure accountability, bring to justice perpetrators of crimes against journalists and media workers, and ensure that victims have access to appropriate remedies. It further calls upon States to promote a safe and enabling environment for journalists to perform their work independently and without undue interference. As Uganda therefore we have to do all these measure to ensure the safety of media workers and end the culture of impunity.

Ladies and Gentlemen, permit me to remind you that Freedom of expression is a fundamental Human Right enshrined in the Constitution of Uganda. Article 29(1) 2 provides that everyone shall have the right to "Freedom of Speech and Expression" which shall include Freedom of the Press.

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the right to freedom of expression and access to information. "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression which include the freedom to seek, receive and impart knowledge and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers".

Freedom of expression is therefore a right of high significance to other rights. It is also highly significant to sustainable development as SDGs (Goal16) recognise that sustainable development includes, "public access to information and fundamental freedoms"- in this regard, therefore freedom of expression is the lifeblood of democracy and sustainable development. Without the free flow of information and ideas, the public cannot form opinions and take decisions about issues confronting them in daily living. The media therefore plays a pivotal role to the promotion of the Freedom of Expression by empowering citizens with the information they require to exercise their democratic rights. In this case, all efforts must be made to ensure their safety by promoting a safe and conducive working environment.

Ladies and gentlemen, on a sad note- it is so unfortunate seeing journalists targeted for exercising their profession. The state of safety of journalists' worldwide is so discouraging. The 2016 UNESCO Director General's Report on the safety of journalists and the danger of impunity indicates that journalists and media workers are being attacked in the course of duty including our own Ugandan journalists and most of these cases have not been resolved. Such a situation and impunity for crimes committed against journalists and media professional is a major obstacle to ensuring the safety of journalist and in turn shrinking the space for freedom of expression as a whole and stifling critical voices and debates on issues of public and national importance. Threats of violence and attacks against journalists in particular create a climate of fear for media professionals, impeding the free circulation of information, opinions and ideas for all citizens.

Ladies and Gentlemen; as I conclude, it is important to continue working together as stakeholders in the media sector on the promotion of freedom of expressing, safety of media workers and access to information. There is need to protect freedom of expression and safety of journalists; prevent violence against media workers, persecute perpetrators of crimes against media professions, and end impunity for crimes against journalists.

Today, on this 9th International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, i salute all journalists, especially those who risk their safety and their lives to inform citizens with accurate reporting. It is my strong held belief that factual, accurate reporting should never put anyone's life in danger.

I wish you all successful deliberations and marking of the International Day to End Impunity for crimes against Journalists 2021.

For God and My country

**Rosie Agoi
Secretary General**