

COMMITTEE TO PROTECT JOURNALISTS
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTING
INTER AMERICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION
INTERNATIONAL PRESS INSTITUTE
WORLD ASSOCIATION OF NEWSPAPERS
WORLD PRESS FREEDOM COMMITTEE

To: Ambassador Olabiyi Babalola Joseph Yai
Permanent Delegate of Benin to UNESCO
and Chairman, Executive Board of UNESCO
Permanent Delegation of Benin to UNESCO
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Your Excellency,

This letter is to inform you that the member groups of the Coordinating Committee of Press Freedom Organizations meeting recently in Paris expressed their concern that UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, should continue to act effectively in its function as a defender and champion of freedom of expression worldwide.

The Coordinating Committee members expressed their deep appreciation for the vital contributions of the outgoing UNESCO Director General Koichiro Matsuura to consolidating UNESCO as a force for freedom of expression and to furthering free speech and press freedom values, in line with the UNESCO Constitution's mandate to foster "the free flow of information by word and image."

The Coordinating Committee members therefore call upon UNESCO member-states to reaffirm their commitments to the defense and promotion of freedom of expression and press freedom as core criteria in considering the choice of the next Director General.

It is critical that UNESCO member governments should seek commitments from candidates to head the Organization's Secretariat to:

- Continue to make furtherance of freedom of expression and press freedom central to the Programme of UNESCO's Communication & Information Sector;
- Continue to support the fostering of independent news media as the leading criterion in the choice of UNESCO media aid projects in post-conflict zones and elsewhere and continue to support UNESCO's Intergovernmental Program for the Development of Communication, using the same priority criterion;

- Continue to name independent journalists widely respected by their colleagues as members of the Jury for UNESCO's annual World Press Freedom Prize and continue to honor the independent Jury's choices of Prize laureates;
- Continue to spotlight and speak out publicly against assassinations of news media personnel and to undertake effective diplomatic measures against serious incidents or policies that obstruct the work of the news media.

The member groups of the Coordinating Committee look forward to continuing their cooperation with the new Director General and the Secretariat staff in the cause of freedom of expression and free and independent journalism, nationally, regionally and globally.

The Coordinating Committee accordingly calls upon UNESCO's member states to reaffirm that a commitment in practice to uphold the values of freedom of expression and press freedom embodied in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights -

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information through any media and regardless of frontiers” -

should be uppermost in the policies of the next Director General of UNESCO. The image and legitimacy of UNESCO depend upon this.

We respectfully request that you communicate this letter to the members of UNESCO's Executive Board.

Sincerely,

Joel Simon, Executive Director, Committee to Protect Journalists, New York City
Hector Oscar Amengual, Director General, International Association of Broadcasting,
Montevideo, Uruguay

Julio Munoz, Executive Director, Inter American Press Institute, Miami

David Dadge, Director, International Press Institute, Vienna

Timothy Balding, Chief Executive Officer, World Association of Newspapers, Paris

Mark Bench, Executive Director, World Press Freedom Committee, Washington DC

cc: Koichiro Matsuura, Director General, UNESCO