

AFRICAN CHARTER ON BROADCASTING

There have been significant gains in media freedom in Africa since the adoption of the Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press in 1991. However, the declaration focussed primarily on the promotion of the print media and was silent on issues such as broadcasting liberalisation and the globalisation of the communications industry. These issues have far reaching social and economic implications for media freedom and threaten to jeopardise the production of media that reflects Africa's rich cultural diversity.

A representative group of African media practitioners sought to address these concerns at a UNESCO conference called to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the original Windhoek Declaration. The result was the **African Charter on Broadcasting**, which serves as a modern blueprint for policies and laws determining the future of broadcasting and information technology in Africa.

Acknowledging the enduring relevance and importance of the Windhoek Declaration to the protection and promotion of freedom of expression and of the media;

Noting that freedom of expression includes the right to communicate and access to means of communication;

Mindful of the fact that the Windhoek Declaration focuses on the print media and recalling Paragraph 17 of the Windhoek Declaration, which recommended that a similar seminar be convened to address the need for independence and pluralism in radio and television broadcasting;

Recalling the fact that the frequency spectrum is a public resource which must be managed in the public interest;

Recognising that the political, economic and technological environment in which the Windhoek Declaration was adopted has changed significantly and that there is a need to complement and expand upon the original Declaration;

Aware of the existence of serious barriers to free, independent and pluralistic broadcasting and to the right to communicate through broadcasting in Africa;

Cognisant of the fact that for the vast majority of the peoples of Africa, the broadcast media remains the main source of public communication and information;

We the Participants of Windhoek+10 Declare that:

Part One

GENERAL REGULATORY ISSUES

- 1 The legal framework for broadcasting should include a clear statement of the principles underpinning broadcast regulation, including promoting respect for freedom of expression, diversity, and the free flow of information and ideas, as well as a three-tier system for broadcasting: public service, commercial and community.
- 2 All formal powers in the areas of broadcast and telecommunications regulation should be exercised by public authorities which are protected against interference, particularly of a political or economic nature, by, among other things, an appointments process for members which is open, transparent, involves the participation of civil society, and is not controlled by any particular political party.
- 3 Decision-making processes about the overall allocation of the frequency spectrum should be open and participatory, and ensure that a fair proportion of the spectrum is allocated to broadcasting uses.
- 4 The frequencies allocated to broadcasting should be shared equitably among the three tiers of broadcasting.
- 5 Licensing processes for the allocation of specific frequencies to individual broadcasters should be fair and transparent, and based on clear criteria which include promoting media diversity in ownership and content.
- 6 Broadcasters should be required to promote and develop local content, which should be defined to include African content, including through the introduction of minimum quotas.
- 7 States should promote an economic environment that facilitates the development of independent production and diversity in broadcasting.
- 8 The development of appropriate technology for the reception of broadcasting signals should be promoted.

Part Two

PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

- 1 All State and government controlled broadcasters should be transformed into public service broadcasters, that are accountable to all strata of the people as represented by an independent board, and that serve the overall public interest, avoiding one-sided reporting and programming in regard to religion, political belief, culture, race and gender.
- 2 Public service broadcasters should, like broadcasting and telecommunications regulators, be governed by bodies which are protected against interference.
- 3 The public service mandate of public service broadcasters should be clearly defined.
- 4 The editorial independence of public service broadcasters should be guaranteed.
- 5 Public service broadcasters should be adequately funded in a manner that protects them from arbitrary interference with their budgets.
- 6 Without detracting from editorial control over news and current affairs content and in order to promote the development of independent productions and to enhance diversity in programming, public service broadcasters should be required to broadcast minimum quotas of material by independent producers.
- 7 The transmission infrastructure used by public service broadcasters should be made accessible to all broadcasters under reasonable and non-discriminatory terms.

Part Three

COMMUNITY BROADCASTING

- 1 Community broadcasting is broadcasting which is for, by and about the community, whose ownership and management is representative of the community, which pursues a social development agenda, and which is non-profit.
- 2 There should be a clear recognition, including by the international community, of the difference between decentralised public broadcasting and community broadcasting.
- 3 The right of community broadcasters to have access to the Internet, for the benefit of their respective communities, should be promoted.

PART Four

TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND CONVERGENCE

- 1 The right to communicate includes access to telephones, email, Internet and other telecommunications systems, including through the promotion of community-controlled information communication technology centres.
- 2 Telecommunications law and policy should promote the goal of universal service and access, including through access clauses in privatisation and liberalisation processes, and proactive measures by the State.
- 3 The international community and African governments should mobilise resources for funding research to keep abreast of the rapidly changing media and technology landscape in Africa.
- 4 African governments should promote the development of online media and African content, including through the formulation of non-restrictive policies on new information and communications technologies.
- 5 Training of media practitioners in electronic communication, research and publishing skills needs to be supported and expanded, in order to promote access to, and dissemination of, global information.

PART Five

IMPLEMENTATION

- 1 UNESCO should distribute the African Charter on Broadcasting as broadly as possible, including to stakeholders and the general public, both in Africa and worldwide.
- 2 Media organizations and civil society in Africa are encouraged to use the Charter as a lobbying tool and as their starting point in the development of national and regional broadcasting policies. To this end media organisations and civil society are encouraged to initiate public awareness campaigns, to form coalitions on broadcasting reform, to formulate broadcasting policies, to develop specific models for regulatory bodies and public service broadcasting, and to lobby relevant official actors.
- 3 All debates about broadcasting should take into account the needs of the commercial broadcasting sector.
- 4 UNESCO should undertake an audit of the Charter every five years, given the pace of development in the broadcasting field.
- 5 UNESCO should raise with member governments the importance of broadcast productions being given special status and recognised as cultural goods under the World Trade Organization rules.
- 6 UNESCO should take measures to promote the inclusion of the theme of media, communications and development in an appropriate manner during the UN Summit on the Information Society in 2003.



AFRICAN CHARTER
ON BROADCASTING

(The logo represents the symbols *li* (eye) and *yu* (to hear) that are used by the Bamum people of Cameroon.)