

Seminar and Inter-regional Dialogue on the Protection of Journalists

Opening Remarks by Mr Guy Berger, Director, Freedom of Expression and Media Development UNESCO [3 minutes]

Good morning colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much to esteemed colleagues from the European Court of Human Rights, the Council of Europe,, and all partners in this event.

Yesterday, as we know, the international community commemorated the inaugural International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists.

We have heard of the numbers: **more than 700 journalists** have been killed because of their profession.

However, **nine out of ten** cases of such killings are never resolved. This unacceptably low rate of conviction feeds into a **vicious cycle of impunity** where perpetrators are emboldened to commit more crimes.

Later this month, UNESCO's Member States will be discussing the 2014 Report of the Director-General on the Safety of Journalists and the Danger of Impunity, in the forum of our Intergovernmental Council IPDC Council.

The Director-General's Report tracks the status of the investigation of **593 cases** of killings of journalists media workers, and social media producer of news from 2006-2013.

Allow me to share with you two key findings:

- Out of the total of 593 cases, UNESCO has received information about the resolution of only 38 cases, representing 6.4 percent of the total.
- 171 cases or 28.8 percent are still ongoing in various stages of judicial inquiry,

Further, and as our Director General, Irina Bokova, has said in an article published all around the world to mark Impunity Day:

“We have received no information from member states for more than 60% of the killings that I have condemned in public statements. This cannot go on.”

She has again encouraged all governments to show their commitment to justice in these unresolved cases, calling on them also to respond to UNESCO's mandated requests to voluntarily report on judicial follow-up.

Given the breadth and depth of the widespread issue of impunity, a holistic multi-stakeholder approach is crucial. The **UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity** embodies this strategy by including Member States, UN agencies, NGOs, IGOs, academia and the media in concerted courses of action.

Tomorrow, many of these actors will also be holding the 3rd UN Inter-Agency Meeting with the precise aim to review the implementation of the UN Plan in the past two years and to refine our strategies on the issues.

Today, we are addressing one very crucial constituency in the fight to end impunity, that is the people who work in and for the justice system.

Why should such people care about impunity in the cases of attacks on journalists in particular?

One answer is evident in the emerging Sustainable Development Goals, which will next year update the world's Millennium Development Goals.

The UN's first draft of these new goals points to the need to significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere, to promote the rule of law, and to strengthen relevant national institutions to help prevent violence and combating terrorism and crime.

In short, for development, the world must tackle impunity for crimes. And why not begin with those who bring us the information needed for decision-making, and whose public role makes them highly visible actors?

For UNESCO, a key means of implementing these new goals is to foreground the fight to achieve justice for killed journalists. When the rule of law applies to those who kill journalists, the rest of society gets the very visible message that a line is being drawn in favour of the rule of law.

Today then, we can exchange views about the gaps in the justice system. We can examine how good practices in one region be replicated in another. We can explore what the international community, including the UN system, can do in collaboration with the judicial system to tackle impunity?

These then are some of the issues that will undoubtedly be raised throughout today's important seminar and I look forward to a fruitful discussion.

Thank you.