



3 May 2012, Copenhagen/Halifax

Myanmar: Workshops on Broadcasting and Print Laws

The Government of Myanmar has made a strong public commitment to undertake a programme of democratisation, including through creating an environment in which freedom of expression is respected. A key part of this will be to create an enabling legal environment for a free media, adopting new democratic laws and repealing or amending the many repressive laws which still remain in force in the country. As first steps, the Government is planning to adopt new press and broadcasting laws.

To provide expertise on relevant international standards as well as better national practice, International Media Support (IMS) and the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD) organised two one-day workshops in Myanmar, one on broadcast regulation in the new capital, Naypyidaw, on 23 April 2012, and another on print media regulation in Yangon on 25 April. The workshops, attended by senior government officials, civil society and media representatives, provided an excellent opportunity to discuss key regulatory issues relating to both media sectors.

"There was enormous interest in these workshops from both officials and civil society, with attendance nearly double what had been planned," said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of the Centre for Law and Democracy. *"There seems to be a real commitment on the part of the officials who attended these workshops to adopt laws which are consistent with international standards."*

The signs from Myanmar about commitment to reform are very positive. At the same time, the challenges of moving from an environment of extensive government control over the media to greater respect for freedom of expression are very significant. Putting in place a good legal framework will be an important early step in this process.

"These workshops on media law are a result of the government's commitment to media reform and willingness to include the country's media actors in the drafting process, also drawing on international expertise in this field," said Jesper Højberg, Executive Director of IMS. *"We hope that our support and the continuation of this inclusive process will help create an enabling environment for free media in Myanmar."*

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