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Myanmar: Media Lawyers Agree to Form Network

Earlier this week a group of lawyers in Myanmar with an interest in media law came to an important decision: to form the Myanmar Media Lawyers' Network. The decision was made at a workshop for media lawyers, the third such meeting facilitated by the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD) and International Media Support (IMS), as part of their capacity building work in Myanmar. The 30 lawyers who attended the meeting were unanimous in their interest in and enthusiasm for the idea.

"We are extremely pleased that lawyers in Myanmar will have a dedicated network focusing on media law issues," said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of CLD. *"We hope the network will serve as a focal point for building the capacity of its members and creating a core of media law experts."*

"In our experience from other parts of the world, networks such as this ensure that the lawyers can benefit from one another's skills and experience and use this knowledge to provide the best possible support to media practitioners in need of legal advice," said Esben Harboe, Programme Manager for IMS' work in Myanmar.

CLD prepared a background paper for the workshop that reviewed how different lawyers' associations around the world approached questions such as their mandates, governing structures, membership and funding. These were discussed during the workshop, including in small group sessions, and consensus was reached on many issues. The participants decided that the Network will carry out a range of activities with a view to building the knowledge and expertise of its members, providing policy insight on key freedom of expression issues and intervening in important freedom of expression debates in the country. Lawyers' associations in many countries have been a force for the promotion and protection of human rights and democratic values.

To take this work forward, participants chose a six-member steering committee and gave them a mandate to prepare draft constitutional documents for the Network and to plan activities. The participants also made a joint commitment to expand membership to include other lawyers with an interest in these issues.

The background paper is available at: <http://www.law-democracy.org/live/myanmar-media-lawyers-agree-to-form-network>.

For further information, please contact:

Toby Mendel

Esben Q. Harboe

Executive Director
Centre for Law and Democracy
toby@law-democracy.org
+1 902 431-3688
www.law-democracy.org

Programme Manager
International Media Support
eh@i-m-s.dk
+45 5210 7805
www.i-m-s.dk