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2023 Joint Declaration on Media Freedom and Democracy

Today, the specialised mandates tasked with promoting and protecting freedom of expression at the UN, OAS, OSCE and African Commission launched their annual [Joint Declaration](#), this year on Media Freedom and Democracy. The Joint Declaration, which was drafted with the assistance of the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD), describes the important role of free, independent and pluralistic media in supporting democracy, human rights and other important social values, and then sets out the obligations and responsibilities of States, online platforms and the media themselves to ensure that the media can fulfil these important roles.

“A key aim of the 2023 Joint Declaration is to reaffirm the importance of professional news media in maintaining the key values that support and sustain democracy”, said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of CLD. *“Support for media freedom is more important today than ever – due to the erosion of media business models and increasing official attacks on media freedom in both emerging and established democracies – and yet public understanding of how important this is has waned.”*

The Joint Declaration has three separate sections focusing on States. The first calls on States to establish an enabling environment for the media, focusing heavily on the promotion of media diversity and protection of journalists against legal and physical attacks and harassment. The second calls on States to refrain from violating media freedom, including by ensuring that legal restrictions are in line with international law and by politicians not undermining public trust in the media and instead demonstrating tolerance of criticism. The third calls for economic measures to support the media, including the fair allocation of State subsidies and advertising.

Another section calls on online platforms to respect human rights standards, to strengthen transparency and the power of users to control their online experiences, and to conduct human rights impact assessments of their operations and mitigate any risks these identify. It also calls on large platforms to compensate media fairly for their business use of media content. A final section calls on the media to respect professional standards, including by putting in place self-regulatory mechanisms to develop and apply professional codes of conduct.

The Joint Declaration is available [here](#). Other languages will follow soon.

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