

International Federation of Journalists/

Friedrich Ebert Foundation

South Asia Media Solidarity Network

Representatives of journalists' trade unions, press freedom organisations and journalists and experts from Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Bangladesh, met in Kathmandu, Nepal, from September 1-3, 2006 in the third biennial meeting of the South Asia Media Solidarity Network (SAMSAN).

The representatives agreed to continue to work together in support of change through the South Asia Media Solidarity Network.

This network of journalists unions and press freedom organisations at this meeting enables the ongoing exchange of information on press freedom and rights of journalists, particularly through email and web usage.

It will:

- Continue to document attacks on press freedom, freedom of expression and journalists' rights
- Provide information for the annual IFJ report on press freedom in South Asia
- Encourage coordination between journalists' unions and press freedom organisations at a local, national and regional level
- Develop a training program to build capacity to support this work
- Seek to convene a fourth biennial meeting of the network in two years time

The IFJ will coordinate this networking through its offices in Delhi and Sydney.

Organisations will nominate people responsible for follow up support through the solidarity network to issue country protests and communicate on relevant issues, particularly from conflict affected regions.

Plan for further action

We further agree to adopt the following framework and elements for an urgent programme of action and assistance to media:

1. A fair workplace

To unify the profession through structural support and political recognition of the need for genuine journalists' associations and trade unions;

To promote trade union and organisational development in each country and to seek minimum standards of social and professional conditions of service for journalists and to ensure that all journalists and media staff are adequately paid for their work.

To demand that governments involve genuine journalist unions in accreditation processes

To facilitate the regional and international exchange of experience and best practice on trade union building, organising, recruiting, campaigning and management.

To build the capacity of trade unions and journalists' association including membership, communication and administrative systems and democratic representative structures.

2. **Human rights, diversity, conflict and editorial independence**

To launch broadly-based campaigns supported by coalitions of groups within civil society and journalism in defence of media freedom (for instance: campaigning for access to information and against criminal defamation, anti terror laws that target the media and the misuse of other laws against journalists);

To develop joint initiatives of journalists' organisations and other groups in civil society in support of fundamental human rights;

To continue and expand professional training programmes covering conflict reporting and tolerance as developed by the IFJ, its unions and other media interest groups which should also promote the values of citizenship and diversity in media;

To examine new ways and methods of working on the issue of journalism and conflict in order to widen the scope of reporting which will create new options for reporters and editors and ensure professional access to all relevant sources of information and interests involved;

To promote common standards of editorial independence and minimum editorial statutes in state-owned, public and private media in the region through initiatives of the IFJ and its member organisations;

To develop and strengthen independent systems of self-regulation under the jurisdiction of media professionals which can act as media observatories to monitor media performance paying particular attention to issues of diversity in the media and violations of press freedom;

To encourage journalists organisations to adopt codes of ethics, including the IFJ Code.

To recognise outstanding journalism in the area of conflict, diversity and tolerance through an annual journalism award for journalists in the region.

To promote policies of gender equality in the media, including within journalists' associations and trade unions, in order to encourage decision making and leadership by women.

3. Journalists under pressure

To work for a safe environment for journalists in the region, including through safety training, translating and adapting safety materials into major languages and demanding the issue of safety including safety training and insurance be included in collective agreements;

To look at new ways of uniting journalists and others into national and regional networks to support press freedom;

To urgently respond to challenges to journalists rights in individual countries through international missions, global days of action, seek financial assistance to journalists in need and other relevant regional and international solidarity;

To continue to develop means of highlighting press freedom infringements and alerting the region and the world to these attacks.

4. Solidarity

To build on the structures for cross-border co-operation and regional networks of media centres, training institutes and journalists' unions and associations, including through national and regional e-groups;

To organise meetings for journalists' organisations and media in each country to promote co-operation and solidarity among media professionals;

Follow-up work

To insist that a comprehensive plan of action for the support and development of media and independent journalism in South Asia is included within the international programmes being developed for the region including the allocation of substantial funding to achieve these aims.

Kathmandu,
3 September, 2006