



**A Message to the European Development Days from the
Africa Forum for Media Development and Global Forum for
Media Development
8 November 2008**

1.0 Background

In September, 2008, the European Union organised the EU/AU Africa Forum for Media Development in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The agreement reached between the EU and AU at this event will be an important agenda item at the forthcoming European Development Days in Strasbourg, November 15 – 17, 2009.

The Africa Forum for Media Development (AFMD) is a sub-Saharan representative network of media and media development organisations established on 7-8 September 2008 in Grahamstown, South Africa. The AFMD is the Africa regional constituent member forum of the Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD). The GFMD is a global network of more than 500 media development organisations organised into various regional forums including the AFMD, a Latin & Caribbean Forum, an Asian Forum, a Eurasian Forum, a Middle East & North African Forum and a Forum of international media development organisations.

This note collates some key messages that the AFMD and GFMD network would urgently like to communicate to the European Development Days.

2.0 A warm welcome for this focus

The priority focus that the EU and AU have decided to give to the issue of media development is warmly welcomed and the AFMD and GFMD would like to congratulate both organisations for their leadership on this critical issue.

Media development has been seriously neglected in development strategies at a time when the role of a free, plural and professional media has become increasingly central in shaping democratic development outcomes. We strongly welcome the declarations of increased support for media development by both organisations.

3.0 Some suggested principles

Much remains to be done if the aspirations expressed at the Ouagadougou Forum are to be translated into practical action. The Strasbourg European Development Days provide an opportunity to start that process.

We take note of the fact that **A free and plural media cannot be shaped by government processes:** it is critical, particularly the establishment of a Organisation such as the EUP and Africa Media Observatory and associated initiatives. Strategies in this area should be to support and media support organisations. We have some concerns that efforts such as an African Media Centre compromise such a principle, but look forward to further understanding this and other allied initiatives. We cannot comment usefully on these until we have more detail of what they are designed to achieve and how they will be managed and structured. However, we would urge all such steps to follow some clear principles.

• **Support media as an intrinsic public good:** As the recent Accra Agenda for Action makes clear, we are critical for strengthening democratic ownership of development strategy and policy. We believe build media systems based upon principles of free expression, pluralism and independence that people on the issues that shape their lives. Much engagement with media by development agencies should be the media merely as instruments through which their messages, agendas and profiles can be communicated. Development requires development strategies that understand that a free and plural media is an integral component of democratic development and needs to be supported for this purpose in its own right.

- **Build on what already exists:** It is important that new initiatives build on existing commitments, strategies and capacities. We would highlight in particular:
 - o Build on existing commitments: Media support should be provided in the context of existing declarations and principles such as the 1991 Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press (which was unanimously adopted by the General Assembly of UNESCO), the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa (adopted in 2002 by the African Commission on People's and Human Rights (an organ of the African Union), and the African Charter on Broadcasting (adopted by an international UNESCO conference which took place in Namibia in 2001 held to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration). Many media organisations in Africa believe that the continent is well served by these existing instruments and principles, as well as other international standards such as the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN's International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights. The priority, more than further declarations and charters is the implementation and broader ownership of those that already exist including the strengthening of African mechanisms such as the African Court of Human Rights; sub-regional African tribunals (such as the SADC Tribunal and the Ecowas court) as enforcement mechanisms of these standards; and the African Commission

- on Human and People's Rights, particularly in relation to the role of its African Freedom of Expression Rapporteur o Build on existing strategies: Very substantial consultation and strategic work has already been carried out to develop African and media driven media development strategies on a Pan African scale, particularly through the Strengthening Africa's Media (STREAM) process organised by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Media Development Initiative (AMDI) organised by the BBC World Service Trust. STREAM involved 5 physical consultation conferences of media practitioners across the continent as well as an extensive online consultation with hundreds of respondents. AMDI conducted research which was implemented through two African universities and dozens of African media researchers and consultants. These two initiatives have now been combined and consolidated into the African Media Initiative (AMI) led by an African board served by a secretariat based in the BBC World Service Trust. AMI is in the process of establishing a new Foundation for (Africanled) media development in Africa.

- o Build on existing capacities: Beyond these initiatives, there are many individual strong African media development organisations, and international organisations, many of whom have faced increasing problems in accessing resources in recent years. We urge an investment in existing strong organisations, initiatives and structures rather than the creation of new ones.

4.0 Required: An Architecture to Match Money with Need

In September 2008, the Global Forum for Media Development and the Salzburg Seminar invited Professor Paul Collier, author of the Bottom Billion, to speak on the subject of media development. He argued that while elections were important in securing democracy in bottom billion countries, they would not be successful unless much greater attention was paid to the role of the media.

He summed up his argument¹ thus:

"I [will] close by saying there is a really good case for public money to go into this [media development] effort. Public effort went into spreading elections, and we now recognize that they did not work. Not because they were not the right idea of accountability, but they were not enough. What makes elections work? An informed society. How do we get one -the public good aspects of the media? Is that public good aspect adequately supplied at the moment? No it isn't. Is there money available to supply it? Yes there is. We just need an architecture to match money with need."

We strongly agree with Professor Collier's analysis. There is currently no development architecture which intelligently supports media development in developing countries and matches money with need.

¹The full transcript of Professor Collier's comments can be found at <http://www.salzburgseminar.org/mediafiles/MEDIA44723.pdf>

Among the challenges of creating such an architecture are the following:

- A free and plural media cannot be sensibly supported through governmental channels. This means that fresh channels of support need to be developed outside of the framework of budget support. Supporting a free, independent and plural media can only take place when the environment for action is free of political self-interest. As funding has increasingly been channelled through general budget support to governments, funding mechanisms that support democratic media have been restricted. This has created serious and intensifying problems for media and media support groups focused on development issues.
- There is no clear institutional home within the development system for media support and consequently very limited focus of leadership or responsibility for developing effective, coherent channels and strategies for supporting independent media. There is an urgent need for clear coordination and focal points within the development system capable of paying sustained attention to and tracking the role of media in democracy and development.
- There is a very limited research base providing insight into one of the most rapidly changing constituents of modern democracies, particularly with regard to the implication for democratic development of rapid media liberalisation, more fragmented media systems and new technologies. Little research is available to enable development decision-makers to determine what strategies are most or least effective in media development. The information and communication needs of people living in poverty are especially poorly understood.
- A need for focus: this is about strengthening media within developing countries, not media coverage about them: a major problem facing media development organisations is the conflation of strategies designed to improve international reporting of development (an important goal) with strengthening independent media within countries. These are two very different strategic priorities. Senior level people within development agencies need to be made responsible for developing media development strategies as part of their mainstream development programme agenda, not as part of their international advocacy efforts. There is a need to nurture human resources and capacity explicitly focused on media development. Such capacity hardly exists at present within the development system. Where it is available, it is often located inappropriately in external relations and communications.

5.0 Conclusion

We strongly welcome the increased prioritisation by the European Union and Africa Union of media development as an issue.

A major investment has already been made in developing coherent strategic responses to support media in Africa and elsewhere. Resources are now urgently required to support a largely neglected area over recent years, but so too are better systems for matching resources with need. Clear policy leadership is also required to develop systems that can better translate well developed media development strategies into coherent and increased strategic support.

We urge a substantive future dialogue between the EU and AU -and other bilateral and multilateral development actors -with representatives of media and media development organisations to address these challenges.

Yours sincerely



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