



2007 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Blantyre Resolutions

Preamble

Recalling that freedom of expression is a fundamental human right guaranteed by the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, as well as other international instruments and national constitutions;

Realising that Article 4 of the MISA Constitution bestows the Annual General Meeting with powers of being the highest decision making body;

Reaffirming our commitment to the Windhoek Declaration from where we derive our aims and objectives;

Further reaffirming the right to freedom of expression as a cornerstone of democracy and development and as a means of ensuring respect for all human rights and freedoms;

Desiring to promote media diversity, pluralism, self-sufficiency and independence;

We, the participants to the 2007 MISA Regional Annual General Meeting held in Blantyre, Malawi, do hereby declare and resolve as follows;

1. We are convinced that respect for freedom of expression, as well as the right of access to information held by public bodies and companies, will lead to greater public transparency and accountability, as well as to good governance and the strengthening of democracy. To that end, the AGM resolves to mandate the regional secretariat to produce a model access to information law which will be circulated and used as a campaign tool.
2. We verily believe that decisions of any AGM should be complied with. To that end, the regional secretariat is being mandated to increase momentum on the

issues resolved during the 2006 AGM with regard to the bringing into the MISA family DRC and Mauritius and report positively at the next AGM.

3. We are convinced that an independent media profession with effective self-regulation is the best system for promoting freedom of expression and ensuring the highest professional standards for the media. To this end, the 2007 MISA AGM resolve to take measures to support the establishment of self-regulatory mechanisms by the media councils and to build the capacity of the media councils to sustain themselves.
4. We are convinced that laws and customs that repress media freedom and freedom of expression are a disservice to society. The MISA 2007 AGM therefore resolves to endorse the Table Mountain Declaration and mandate national chapters to undertake work towards the abolishment of “insult” laws and criminal defamation. In the same way that MISA continues to promote the Windhoek Declaration, the African Charter on Broadcasting, the Declaration of Principle on the Right to Freedom of Expression in Africa, it will popularise the Table Mountain Declaration and elevate its status as a campaign tool. To this end, MISA resolves to seek the SADC, AU and UN endorsement of the declaration.
5. We have noted the important contribution that can be made to the realisation of the right to freedom of expression by new information and communication technologies (ICTs). As a result, we resolve to mandate the regional secretariat to implement measures that will improve capacity to undertake coordinated research throughout all the chapters.
6. We reaffirm our commitment to fight for the realisation of the right to freedom of expression as envisaged by article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights. We therefore appeal and call upon the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights to seek an invitation from the government and visit Angola to assess the media freedom and freedom of expression situation as a pre-requisite to free and fair elections in preparation of the anticipated elections.
7. The 2007 MISA AGM notes with concern the fact that the Press Law of 2006 in Angola falls short of international and regional minimum standards therefore mandates the MISA-Angola chapter to develop a model Press Law that complies to the acceptable international and regional standards and present it to the government of Angola for enactment.
8. Zimbabwe and Lesotho remain with one of the most repressive media and freedom of expression environments as witnessed by the continued arrest of journalists. In Zimbabwe the situation is compounded by the passing of further anti-media and freedom of expression laws such as the Interception of Communications Act and the brutal clampdown on any form of dissent from marches to other forms of popular expression. The AGM resolves to direct the

regional secretariat to work with the two national chapters to monitor the situation and find lasting solutions.

9. The 2007 MISA AGM has received with satisfaction reports that other chapters have embarked on regional lobby. The AGM resolves to direct MISA chapters that have exhausted domestic remedies in seeking relief in various matters to immediately consider approaching the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.
10. Aware that MISA operates in the SADC region and that SADC heads of states meet in an ordinary summit once a year. The AGM resolves to mandate the MISA regional secretariat to engage with the SADC secretariat to work towards MISA obtaining observer status at the SADC Heads of State Summit.

Thus done in **Blantyre, Malawi, this 4th day of September 2007.**