New Voices
Media Freedom Helping to Transform Societies

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A powerful moment for press freedom occurred in Windhoek 21 years ago. At this year’s World Press Freedom Day in Tunis, we have another opportunity to promote strong and free media.

African journalists created the declaration of Windhoek. UNESCO and the United Nations Secretariat recognized its value and turned it into a timeless event. The declaration laid the foundations of an independent and pluralist African Press. Every year on this day the international community pays tribute. This year we celebrate new voices.

The Windhoek Declaration particularly helped shape the 2002 Declaration on Principles of Freedom of Expression. It was adopted by the African Union’s Commission on Human and People’s Rights. This declaration continues to serve as a benchmark for best practice media environments in Africa.

Overarching messages:

- Governance is one of the core operational priorities of the Bank.
- The key focus is to strengthen transparency and accountability in the management of public resources, at the country, sector and regional levels, with special attention to fragile states and natural resources management.
- Free and strong media is one of the main instruments that guarantee good governance. The press is a partner, a counterpart and a watchdog for the implementation of efficient states and accountable service delivery.

A key element of inclusive growth is equitable access to information

AfDB is supporting stronger and more inclusive growth, greater opportunity and economic integration across Africa. Now is the time to address the digital divide. While there is a revolution in access to modern communication, especially mobile telephony, the continent is lagging behind in the broadband race. African media are put online every day, an increasing number of people have access to information on key socio-political issues but, most importantly, the IT revolution is reaching African countries unequally with large regional disparities.

The African Development Bank is more than ever committed to promoting science, technology and innovation in Africa.

In Nairobi last month, the Bank organized the First Africa Forum on STI. More than 30 African Ministers of Education and Science attending the First African Forum on
Science, Technology and Innovation for Youth Employment, Human Capital Development and Inclusive Growth unanimously pledged to put STI policies, strategies, programs and plans into action in the next five years.

**We need critical thinkers in Africa – one of the answers is a new education model for Africa**

An example of such projects is the unique tripartite partnership among the Bank, the Government of Rwanda and Carnegie Mellon University. This centre of excellence will be the first highly ranked American university to operate a fully-fledged campus in Africa. As is the case in many of our projects, this example is based on a public-private partnership model. Such partnerships will allow educational institutions to tap into the experiences, knowledge and financial leverage of the private sector. This ICT centre of excellence will comprise an innovation incubator, an executive education center, a mobility research center, a practical training center and a graduate education program.

The New Education Model for Africa addresses two key issues that we have discussed today – youth employment and accountability – as well as developing critical thinking among youth.

Projects such as the African Virtual University have put into practice a New Education Model for Africa. This new model is mainly ICT-based. It moves away from a classroom based education model in order to provide increased access to quality education. The African Virtual University has established the largest network of open distance and eLearning institutions in over 30 Sub-Saharan African countries.

There is a mismatch between skills development and labour market demands in Africa. This results in structural unemployment. Our operations aim to build adapted skills in order to increase employability and create jobs.

**Capacity building in the African media**

The Bank is part of a multilateral capacity building initiative in partnership with the African Media Initiative, the Institute for the World Bank and Rhodes University in South Africa. For the past two years the Bank has been a major sponsor of the African Media Leaders Forum, which AMI organizes every year:
- Journalists across Africa have been trained on specific issues;

- The Bank organized a special training in collaboration with the CAP JC (Centre Africain de perfectionnement des journalistes et de communication) in the context of the World Press Freedom Day on governance and social inclusion;

- On the Second of May the Bank sponsored a roundtable here in Tunisia on the theme of “Media and Governance: how to preserve the pioneering role of Tunisia in the awakening of the Arab World” and how “responsible freedom” of the press can enhance opportunities to strengthen democratic discourse in Tunisia;

- What can be done by the media themselves;

- What can be done by civil society and politicians.

How government can promote the process through better regulation?

It will help bridge professionalization gaps at managerial and editorial levels, and will allow the adaptation of press to new media.

This capacity building programme will help mainstream development issues in the curricula of African communication training institutions. It will also launch the development of mechanisms to mobilize resources for African media.

Among the new voices transforming societies are the young Tunisians consolidating and improving access to information, transparency and accountability. The media plays an important role in promoting access to information in Tunisia. One can still hear the voice of the Tunisians that protested last year for increasing voice and accountability. The Tunisians revolted against a regime that controlled information. This challenge took place in the streets but also on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Google.

The African Development Bank has been working closely with its partner, the Tunisian government, since last year to ensure that it lasts and improves even more. After the revolution, the Bank was the first partner to support the transitional government of Tunisia. Among the goals of our Program of Support for Social Inclusion and Transition in Tunisia is to reduce the disparity between regions. We are also targeting civil society, including women, have a greater role in public space.
The new draft law on access to information in Tunisia presents a revolution within the revolution. Today, citizens can express themselves in Tunisian newspapers; control of the internet has drastically decreased, private radio stations are being created in each region of the country, the number of government websites have increased with introduction of e-participation mechanisms and the government share of monthly data on budget execution to its citizens.

The aspiration of the Tunisian People to participate in public affairs implies new opportunities and responsibilities for the administration but also for the press and civil society. Citizens have a greater role in the advocacy, application and analysis of information, training and monitoring and evaluation. Consequently, the mobilization of civil society and the private sector is necessary in order to broaden and deepen the scope of reforms, such as the mechanism which allows complaints to challenge the allocation of procurement.

**Have your say on our upcoming strategy – improving the access to information of the Bank**

The Bank is improving its website design and navigability to ease further access to information and showcase how its operations are impacting people’s lives. Furthermore, we are engaging the online public via Web platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and through discussion forums, surveys and blogs.

Most importantly, we have currently launched online consultations on our first Human Capital Development Strategy on [www.afdb.org](http://www.afdb.org) under the sections ‘consultations’ where you can all have your say.

A strategy for Human Capital Development is urgently required because education, health and safety nets are inextricably linked with economic growth and poverty reduction. Investments in human capital represent an increasingly important approach and set of instruments for the Bank’s fight against poverty and social exclusion in Africa. Furthermore, the Arab Spring and growing inequalities in southern Africa have brought forward the urgent relevance of the inclusive growth agenda.

In addition, preparations are starting for a new AfDB long-term strategy and, as the premier African financial institution, the African Development Bank should play a pivotal role with its development partners to ensure that Africa has the human capital needed to accelerate economic and social development.

Thank you.