



WSIS | 19-23
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Geneva | Switzerland

WSIS Forum 2018 OUTCOME DOCUMENT

Action Line C9 Facilitation Meeting

1) Title of your session

C9 Media Action Line Meeting: Strengthening the role of media and social media in relation to the SDGs

2) Name of Organization/s organizing the session

UNESCO

3) Relevance with the WSIS Action Lines

UNESCO's session focused on **C9** media. It discussed topics such as traditional media, media independence and pluralism, international imbalances, media safety and security, and the role of media in the Information Society in regards to the findings of UNESCO's 2017/2018 report: *World Trends Report in Freedom of Expression and Media Development*.

The session combined the discussion of media and **C8** cultural diversity on the issues of promoting freedom of artistic expression, public service broadcasting and content/language diversity.

The session tackled **C10** ethical dimensions of the information society and debated issues related to data ethics and the role of social media in countering violent extremism by presenting UNESCO's study "*Youth and violent extremism on social media*" which deals with gender and the youth online.

International and regional cooperation **C11** is an important point that was explored on the basis of another UNESCO study, "*What if we all governed the Internet?*", which focuses on the importance of multistakeholder cooperation.

Finally, this session considered the draft Internet Universality indicators, which relate to all of the Action Lines notably through the ROAMX principles (**C1 to C11**).

4) Key achievements, announcements, launches, agreements, and



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commitments

UNESCO representative Xianhong Hu presented the essential findings of the 2017/2018 report on World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development. The **World Trends Report** explores recent developments at the global and regional levels in media freedom, pluralism, independence, and safety, examined through a gender-sensitive lens and with special attention given to transnational and digital media. The focus of the session was on emerging digital trends, such as the rise in internet shutdowns, the impact of algorithms on diversity of content, 'fake news' as well as the rising challenges of big data and AI on journalism and freedom of expression. The session also shed light on the issue of freedom of artistic expression in relation to the media and SDGs, as a crosscutting aspect related to WSIS C8 "Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content."

UNESCO also took the opportunity to present the draft Internet Universality indicators and related studies "Youth and violent extremism on social media" and "What if we all governed the Internet?" **Youth and violent extremism on social media: Mapping the research** presents new communication and information technologies as tools and platforms that help prevent radicalization and violent extremism, condemn violence and hate speech, and promote inclusion, equality and intercultural dialogue. **What if we all governed the Internet? Advancing multistakeholder participation in Internet governance** shares key values and good practices for effective multistakeholder participation. **The Internet Universality indicators** respond to the expectations of UNESCO Member States and other stakeholders for continued work in developing and strengthening indicators to further understand media landscapes and communication ecosystems, including the Internet.

5) Main outcomes highlighting the following:

I. Debated Issues

Participants of this C9 action line meeting covered a wide range of issues, including the lack of attention given to human rights online, misinformation, the significance of artistic freedom to artists and others, the World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development report, restrictions imposed on access to information, Internet shutdowns, collaborative Internet governance



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models, and the use of social media in developing countries. They also talked about UNESCO's Internet Universality Indicators and all the principles and rights that should apply online.

II. Quotes

- Jyoti Hosagrahar, Director of Division for Creativity, Culture Sector, UNESCO: "The right of artists to express themselves freely is under threat worldwide. New digital technologies and media platforms introduce challenges but also provide great opportunities in this regard. They open new channels for new voices (women, citizen journalists, amateur film producers). We therefore need a legislative base and policies like the 2005 Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions to support all artists' rights."
- Giacomo Mazzone, Head of Institutional Relations, EBU: "There is a lack of attention given to human rights online. I believe we should give more importance to the independence of media public service – they should serve citizens, not the state or the government and this independence should be more protected."
- Peter Micek, Access Now, USA: "Internet is the greatest tool in reaching the SDGs. Unfortunately, digital security attacks are rising and some countries experience a growing number of network shutdowns. At the same time, we see rising pressure on Internet platforms to protect content online, and privacy and data protection tools related to freedom of expression are more and more important."

III. Overall outcomes of the session

The session reflected the essential role of media and social media in the implementation of SDGs in the digital age. Participants stressed the importance of promoting artistic as well as media freedom online, which are under threat worldwide. They also underlined that new digital technologies and media platforms provide opportunities but also introduce challenges, like self-censorship.

IV. Main linkages with the Sustainable Development Goals

UNESCO's work on media aims to help achieve SDG 16 "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels". For



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instance, its project on developing internet universality Indicators embraces five principles which have been and should continue to be fundamental to the development of the Internet and its role in advancing the world's SDGs. The project is also linked with SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 10 on reducing inequality.

V. Emerging Trends related to WSIS Action Lines identified during the meeting

Participants pointed out new challenges regarding freedom of expression and media development, the use of social media by governments during elections, the growing number of network shutdowns around the world, surveillance tools used as attacks, and business models being disrupted for media professionals at the global level.

VI. Suggestions for Thematic Aspects that might be included in the WSIS Forum 2019

Action Line Meeting