

## Seminar and Inter-regional Dialogue on the Protection of Journalists

### Opening Remarks by Mr Guy Berger, Director, Freedom of Expression and Media Development UNESCO

Good morning colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much to esteemed colleagues from the European Court of Human Rights, the Council of Europe, and all partners and participants in this event.

Yesterday, as we know, the international community commemorated the inaugural International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists. The timing of today's seminar is deliberate, and there will be another event to mark the day at the UN General Assembly today, convened by UNESCO, Greece, Tunisia, France, Costa Rica, Austria and Argentina.

We have heard of the numbers: **more than 700 journalists** have been killed because of their profession.

However, **nine out of ten** cases of such killings are never resolved. This unacceptably low rate of conviction feeds into a **vicious cycle of impunity** where perpetrators are emboldened to commit more crimes.

Later this month, UNESCO's Member States will be discussing the 2014 Report of the Director-General on the Safety of Journalists and the Danger of Impunity, in the forum of our Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC).

The Director-General's Report tracks the status of the investigation of **593 cases** of killings of journalists media workers, and social media producer of news from 2006-2013.

Allow me to share with you two key findings:

- Out of the total of almost 600 cases, UNESCO has received information about the resolution of only 38 cases, representing 6.4 percent of the total.
- 171 cases or 28.8 percent are still ongoing in various stages of judicial inquiry,

For the remaining percentage, as our Director General, Irina Bokova, has said in an article published all around the world to mark Impunity Day:

"We have received no information from member states for more than 60% of the killings that I have condemned in public statements."

She added: “This cannot go on”, and has again, in the name of 195 Member States of UNESCO, encouraged all governments to show their commitment to justice in these unresolved cases, calling on them also to respond to UNESCO’s mandated requests to voluntarily report on judicial follow-up.

We need to find solutions to the monitoring, reporting and the actual challenge of ending impunity for attacks on journalists. Given the breadth and depth of impunity, a holistic multi-stakeholder approach is crucial.

This the relevance of the **UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity** which includes not just UN organisations, but also Member States, NGOs, IGOs, academia and the media, in promoting concerted courses of action. The UN Plan has been endorsed by the Chief Executives of the entire UN family, and has been welcomed at the General Assembly.

Tomorrow, many of these actors will also be holding the 3<sup>rd</sup> UN Inter-Agency Meeting with the precise aim to review the implementation of the UN Plan in the past two years and to refine our strategies on the issues. They will discuss how to sensitise governments about the need to protect journalists and end impunity, and how those which have political will but lack institutional capacity can be supported.

Today, we are addressing, amongst others, one very crucial constituency in the fight to end impunity, that is the people who work in and for the justice system. The UN Plan has catalysed much energy, and the question is whether this can extend to our friends in the legal and justice community.

Why should such people care about impunity in the cases of attacks on journalists in particular?

One answer is evident in the emerging Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will next year update the world’s Millennium Development Goals. The SDGs will apply to all countries, developed and developing.

The UN’s first draft of these new goals includes the need to significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere, to promote the rule of law, and to strengthen relevant national institutions to help prevent violence and combating terrorism and crime.

In short, for development worldwide and universally, in Europe and elsewhere, we must tackle impunity for crimes. And why not begin with those who bring us the information needed for decision-making, and whose public role makes them highly visible actors?

For UNESCO, a key means of implementing these new goals is to foreground the fight to achieve justice for killed journalists. When the rule of law is applied to those who kill journalists, the rest of society gets the very visible message that a line is being drawn in favour of the rule of law.

Today then, we can exchange views about the gaps in the justice system. We can examine how good practices in one region be replicated in another. We can explore what the international community, including the UN system, can do in collaboration with the judicial system to tackle impunity.

These then are some of the issues that will undoubtedly be raised throughout today's important seminar and I look forward to a fruitful discussion and to follow-up.

Thank you.