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## **International Mandates: Diversity Key in Digital Transition**

Today, the 14th annual Joint Declaration by the four specialised mandates tasked with promoting and protecting freedom of expression at the UN, OAS, OSCE and African Commission was launched in San José, Costa Rica. This latest Declaration, prepared with the assistance of the Centre for Law and Democracy and ARTICLE 19, highlights the importance of preserving and expanding diversity in the airwaves through the transition to digital terrestrial broadcasting, as well as concern that in some States, “commercial and political considerations have dominated” the debate.

*“The digital terrestrial transition is importantly about efficiency gains in spectrum use,”* said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of CLD, who participated in the launch event. *“States need to make sure that these gains lead to greater diversity in the media, given the centrality of diversity to the effective realisation of freedom of expression.”*

The Joint Declaration elaborates in detail the measures States should take to protect and promote freedom of expression during the digital transition. It highlights the need for clear and consultative decision-making processes about this important social development, and for regulatory measures to be implemented only by a body which is protected against both political and commercial interference (i.e. by an independent regulator). It also provides a number of both recognised and more innovative options for States to consider with a view to fostering greater diversity in broadcasting.

Some of the other key points made in the Declaration include the following:

- The transition should not impact negatively on the ability of public service or community broadcasters to operate.
- Care should be taken to ensure that the transition does not lead to greater concentration of media ownership.
- Effective measures should be taken to prevent the transition leading to a digital divide.

The Joint Declaration is available at: <http://www.law-democracy.org/live/international-mandates-diversity-key-in-digital-transition>.

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