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2018 Joint Declaration by Special Rapporteurs on Media Independence

Today, in Accra, Ghana, the four specialised mandates tasked with promoting and protecting freedom of expression at the UN, OAS, OSCE and African Commission launched their 20th annual statement, the Joint Declaration on Media Independence and Diversity in the Digital Age. The Joint Declaration, which was drafted with the assistance of the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD), addresses modern threats to media independence and diversity, focusing separately on legal, political, technological and economic threats.

“The Joint Declaration breaks new ground in several respects”, said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of CLD. “Among other things, it calls for strict limits in relation to laws focusing specifically on digital communications and for politicians to refrain from putting pressure on online platforms to regulate content.”

The Joint Declaration also highlights a number of modern threats, including:

- Harsh and unwarranted political attacks on the media.
- Cyber-attacks on the media in retaliation for their reporting.
- Legal requirements for online platforms to regulate content, including as part of the “right to be forgotten”.
- The precarious economic environment which is posing a serious threat in particular to legacy media and the risk of anti-competitive practices by dominant market players.
- The growth in information bubbles/silos, which threatens democratic systems, including elections.

The Joint Declaration also directs some recommendations to media and online platforms, including to respect human rights, to operate professionally, including by adopting fact-checking systems, to operate as transparently as possible, beyond minimum legal requirements, and, specifically for online platforms, to support the work of the media, while respecting media independence.

The Joint Declaration is available in English and other languages at: <https://www.law-democracy.org/live/2018-joint-declaration-by-special-rapporteurs-on-media-independence/>.

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