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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

MESSAGE TO ASIA MEDIA SUMMIT

Beijing, 25 May 2010

*Delivered by Mr. Kiyo Akasaka, Under-Secretary-General
for Communications and Public Information*

28/12/09

Mr. Liu, [Yunshan, Director of the Publicity Dept, Communist Party Central Committee]
Mr. Wang, [Taihua, Minister for Radio, Film and Television of the PRC]
Mr. Waheed [President, General Conference of the Asia Pacific Institute for
Broadcasting Development]
Mr. Mottaghi [AIDB]
Ladies and gentlemen;

Thank you for organizing this conference. The United Nations attaches great importance to the work of the media. You bring our messages to the world public; you hold us – and all Governments and institutions – accountable for our decisions and actions.

The media landscape in Asia is moving with lightning speed. The region is experiencing a media explosion, both in traditional print and broadcasting, and in digital media and the internet.

Some countries have seen a huge growth in diversity and plurality, and the development of a vibrant media scene. Newspapers, magazines, television and radio are branching out, tackling new subjects with new formats in new ways.

China has the highest number of internet users of any country in the world. India has the fastest-growing mobile phone market in the world, with 20 million new subscribers every month. Japan continues to innovate in new media technology.

For media professionals and media consumers, this is an exciting time. Information and entertainment are available as never before. The possibilities for forging new, interactive relationships with audiences are almost limitless.

This media revolution is going to have a great impact on societies – politically, socially and culturally.

It is impossible to predict its long-term effects. But we can be sure of one thing. Free, independent media will always be a cornerstone of democracy, transparency, accountability, development and respect for human rights.

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Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right, enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The United Nations works to uphold this right around the world.

But in many countries, including in this region, journalists risk intimidation, detention and even their lives, simply for doing their jobs.

Last year, UNESCO condemned the killing of 77 journalists. These were not high-profile war correspondents who lost their lives in the heat of battle. Most of them worked for small, local publications in peacetime. They were murdered for attempting to expose wrongdoing or corruption. Many of these cases remain unsolved.

Intimidating and silencing the media is achieved in various ways. Killing journalists is simply the most brutal.

In some countries, independent television and radio channels are denied broadcasting rights. In others, the authorities impose high taxes on newsprint so that only the wealthy are able to buy newspapers. Elsewhere, the censors monitor internet use and imprison citizen journalists.

In every case, it is a denial of fundamental human rights, and an obstacle to social and economic development.

The United Nations stands against the silencing of the media and with those who work to keep the powerful accountable, in every country.

Ladies and gentlemen,

You, more than others, know that working in the media can be challenging and exciting, particularly at a time when technological development and culture are moving so fast.

Every Government, every regulator, and every media organization, must find its own path through complex issues.

You will be discussing some of these at this summit: public trust in the media... self-regulation... journalistic ethics. You are on the frontline of these public debates.

But whether you are a media owner or a reporter... an editor or a camera operator... a web designer, a TV presenter, or a radio engineer... I urge all of you here today to remember:

Freedom of expression is your right. It must be nurtured and protected.

Free speech and media freedom are an inseparable part of the United Nations' mission for peace, human development and a better world.

I wish you success in your discussions at this Media Summit, and in your future work.

Thank you.