



**WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT**

ISTANBUL • 23-24 May 2016

# Protecting Journalists and Promoting Independent Reporting in Crisis Situations

## SPECIAL SESSION SUMMARY

All Core Responsibilities of the Agenda for Humanity

**“Free and independent media are essential watchdogs for human rights violations. This is why we must defend the safety of journalists who face attacks, who face harassment, kidnapping, torture, [and] killings.”**

**Ms. Irina Bokova,  
Director General,  
UNESCO**

### I. Overview

Leaders of governments, UN agencies, media and NGOs gathered in a special session hosted by UNESCO’s Director-General, Irina Bokova, chaired by Vuslat Dogan Sabancı, Chairwoman of Turkish Newspaper Hürriyet, and moderated by BBC’s Foreign Correspondent Karen Allen. The session highlighted the increasing risks to journalist safety, threatening the vital role of a free and independent media in preventing, mitigating and reducing the impact of crises. According to UNESCO, over 825 journalists have been killed in the line of duty over the past 10 years. On average, this translates into one media worker killed every five days. In more than nine out of ten cases, those responsible for the killing are never punished. Freelancers and national reporters are most affected and run the greatest risks.

### II. Key outcomes/themes

The session emphasised the media’s contribution to alleviate human suffering before, during and after humanitarian crises by providing access to timely, accurate and reliable information. Media reduces risks by preventing, mitigating and preparing people for disasters; rectifying rumours; and empowering citizens, humanitarian workers and decision-makers to take informed decisions. The importance of journalistic professional and ethical standards including conflict-sensitive reporting, quality journalism and fact-checking, was recognised as equally, if not more important during crises.

Participants focused on specific actions each stakeholder could take under the [UN Plan of Action for the Protection of Journalists](#). Member States were urged to create national protection mechanisms to monitor threats against journalists and end impunity of crimes. Media organizations were encouraged to ensure that staff had the training and resources needed to practice their profession safely. UNESCO reminded participants that Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals calls on Member States to guarantee public access to information. As such, the protection of the safety of journalists is a responsibility of all Member States. The head of Reporters without Borders called for the UN to appoint a Special Representative for the Safety of Journalists in the Office of the UN Secretary General. This call was supported by France and Spain during the session.

### III. Way forward

A number of recommendations were put forward during the session. With respect to UN headquarters, it was recommended that UNESCO continue its global advocacy for the implementation of the UN Plan of Action for the Protection of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity and continue its collaboration with the Office of the Special Adviser on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to urge Member States to implement the UN Plan of Action as part of their responsibilities under Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly the targets on fundamental freedoms, access to information and the rule of law. OCHA and UNESCO were also urged to collaborate with the UN Foundation to raise awareness about the importance of independent reporting in crisis situations and the protection of journalists.

At the regional level, OCHA regional offices were recommended to collaborate with UNESCO regional offices to promote the implementation of the UN Plan of Action for the Protection of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity by UN Country Teams at the regional and country levels. At the country level, Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators, in collaboration with UNESCO country offices, were urged to prioritize the implementation of the UN Plan of Action for the Protection of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity at country level, as part of the UN Delivering as One approach.

### IV. Speakers

**Moderator:**

- Ms. Karen Allen, Foreign Correspondent, BBC News

**Chair:**

- Ms. Vuslat Dogan Sabanci – Chairwoman of Hürriyet newspaper, Turkey

**Speakers:**

- Ms. Irina Bokova, Director General, UNESCO
- Mr. Christophe Deloire, Secretary-General, Reporters without Borders

- Ms. Zaina Erhaim, freelance journalist, Syria
- Ms. Tanit Koch, Editor-in-Chief, Bild newspaper, Germany
- Ms. Habibou Bangre, freelance journalist, DRC
- Mr. Bryn Mooser, Founder RYOT, United States
- Ms. Babita Basnet, President of Media Advocacy Group, Nepal
- Mr. Mazen Hayek, Spokesperson of Middle East Broadcasting Center, United Arab Emirates
- Ms. Mojgan Mostafavi, Deputy Minister for Women Affairs, Afghanistan
- H.E. Jose Manuel García-Margallo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Spain
- H.E. André Vallini, Minister of State for Development and Francophonie, France
- (no name announced), Director of Information, Turkey
- Mr. Frank La Rue, Assistant Director General for Communication, UNESCO