

Task Force Access to Information & Media

GOPAC

Harold Redekopp, June 15, 2007
Amherst Media Consulting Inc.



Goal

To identify ways to promote improved access to information & independence of the media where access to information & media are tightly controlled.

Requirements to meet goal

1. **The need for rule of law & independent judiciary.**
2. **The need for legal protection for journalism.**

Killing the Messenger reports:

- a. 1000 journalists & support staff died trying to report news around world in last 10 years: an average of 2 per week.
- b. Only 1 in 4 died covering war or armed conflict. The majority died in peacetime working in their own countries.
- c. At least 657 men & women murdered & only 1 in 8 killers prosecuted.
- d. In 2/3ds of cases, killers not even identified & probably never will be.

(Report of the Global Inquiry by the International News Safety Institute Into the Protection of Journalists, Brussels, March 2007)

Requirements to meet goal cont'd

3. **The need for a free & open media offering a diversity of views.**
Specifically, there need to be legal vehicles to prevent concentration of private media in a few hands.
4. **The need to assist parliamentarians in drafting effective laws by providing qualified staff, parliamentary libraries, appropriate compensation, etc.**
5. **The need to introduce legislation ensuring access to information.**
6. **The need for training for journalists & media managers.**
7. **The need to increase impact of civil society groups & citizen oversight of public & private sectors.**



Reality Check

1. **The best is the enemy of the good** -*Voltaire*

Even though parliamentarians know the right thing to do, they will not always be able to do them.

Example: The Helsinki Accord of 1975 which contained provisions concerning human rights was signed by the Soviet Union which had no intention of honoring these provisions. So why insist on legislation that may not be implemented?



Reality Check cont'd

On the face of it, the Helsinki Accord might have seemed like a completely toothless document, with no legal provisions for punishing transgressors.

In reality, however, it became a most effective weapon in the hands of dissidents in Soviet bloc countries.

Reality Check cont'd

2. **How can GOPAC & its chapter leadership strengthen their voice with the publics of their countries & regions?**
 - a. GOPAC members to seek input from NGOs & civil society groups as they draft legislation, establish markers & measurable criteria designed to strengthen oversight role of parliamentarians.
 - b. Build alliances to get necessary legislation passed.
 - c. Parliamentarians to work with NGOs in bringing international pressure to force compliance with legislation that has already been promulgated by the country's government.



Task Force - Parliamentarian led process

- Chair of GOPAC Board is the project owner
- Steering committee (SC) includes Chairs of the regional chapters
- Working groups (WGs) include reps from regional chapters
- Supported by international journalism, media & legal experts
- Project manager organizes all task force activity and ensure completion as per agreement
- Target completion for Morocco conference, fall 2008



One year timetable

- Establish budget to cover research, access to expertise, travel, drafting etc. by TBA
- Establish a fund raising committee to ensure resources for task force work are in place
- Establish SC & WGs and assign work by TBA
- WGs report back monthly to SC by teleconference
- Submit mid year review and report to GOPAC Chair & Board by TBA
- Submit first draft report and conclusions to SC by TBA
- SC to refine, test, integrate work into first draft strategic plan by TBA
- Final report to Chair and Board of GOPAC by TBA



Potential Resources

- Centre for Global Studies, Canada
- Centre for the Study of Democracy
- Council of Europe
- Ford Foundation
- Freedom House, US
- Frontline Club Forum Championing Independent Journalism, UK
- Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University, US
- OSCE and ODIHR
- Reporters sans frontières
- Transparency International



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