

## International Mechanisms for Promoting Freedom of Expression

### JOINT DECLARATION

by

**the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the OAS Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression**

London, 26 November 1999

- We, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the OAS Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, recall that freedom of expression is a fundamental and internationally recognised human right and a basic component of any democratic society.
- Independent and pluralistic media are essential to a free and open society and accountable systems of government. The current state of free media in our member-states, although very different from organisation to organisation, is far from perfect.
- Certain governments, that belong to one or more of our organisations, have continued to harass media in their respective countries. The levels of harassment might be different but the general aim is the same: to stomp out pluralism and open debate on issues of concern to citizens.
- Freedom of expression is not only a fundamental human right in and of itself, but it has ramifications for economic development as well. The media has a “corrective” function by bringing to the public attention corruption and inequitable practices. Lack of a free media can often lead to economic stagnation and improper practises by both governments and businesses.
- We urge our participating states and the media in these countries to refrain from serious instances of intolerance, especially “Hate Speech.”

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