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Alliance calls for strong global gender and media agenda

Geneva, 6 November 2014: The Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMAG) has called on UN member states to include strong provisions on gender, media and ICTs in the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"We cannot talk about equality, good governance, freedom of expression and sustainability when women are effectively silenced in and through the media, and where new technologies are used to undermine the human rights of women and women journalists," noted the International Steering Committee (ISC) of GAMAG, a network of 500 media and media development, unions and civil society organisations across the globe.

The GAMAG-ISC, which held its first meeting in Geneva from 4-5 November 2014 under the auspices of UNESCO, said the right to communicate; access to information, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is integral to sustainable development. Currently, GAMAG said, "this issue is glaringly missing from the seventeen SDG's and the 169 targets that will replace the Millennium Development Goals next year."

Research conducted by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) shows that women constitute a mere 24% of news sources. A global study by the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) shows that women constitute 36% of reporters and a quarter of media decision-makers. A range of studies shows a growing gender gap in access to, and ownership of ICTs. New media is also fuelling new forms of violence against women and girls ranging from stalking and trolling to human trafficking.

Threats and violence against media workers in general are well-documented, especially with regard to deadly attacks, by organisations like the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF). But there is no group collecting data on security threats to women journalists globally. Attacks against female media workers are only reported anecdotally, if at all, by international media support organisations.

Provisions that GAMAG wants included in the SDG's include:
- Women's equal and effective participation and freedom from violence in all areas of media decision-making and practice.
- Women's equal access to media ICTs and their benefits.
- The right to safety and bodily integrity in the digitally mediated public sphere.
- Fair and balanced gender portrayal and occupational representation of women in the media.
- Sensitive, fair and rights-based coverage of violence against women and girls.
- Mainstreaming of gender in media and ICT policy and training curricula.
- Gender, media and information literacy training, education and campaigns.

Launched after a watershed UNESCO and ISESCO -led conference on gender and the media in Bangkok in December 2013, GAMAG seeks to harness new opportunities, and address new challenges, for gender equality and women's empowerment in and through media in an information society context which has radically transformed media architectures.

The GAMAG-ISC is concerned that progress towards media that support gender equality and women's rights objectives remains painfully slow. GAMAG will amplify and give visibility to existing key regional and global initiatives on gender and media to hasten the pace of change. Further, GAMAG will take action to ensure that women's communication rights gain prominence in on-going Beijing+20 review events, the post-2015 debates and the World Summit for the Information Society (WSIS)+10.

Priority actions identified by GAMAG include:
- Advocacy on women's empowerment and gender equality in the media and through media to ensure better representation of women in the board rooms and behind editors' desks.
- Acting to better protect women journalists on and offline and on the frontline from violence and abuse. This will include gathering a solid foundation of data on violence against women in the media.
- Developing and curating research, policies and best practices, as well as reporting guidelines for promoting gender responsive and aware media content and practice.
- Gathering and sharing policies, content and good practices that advance gender equality in and through the media and ICTs.
- Furthering research on women in the media.

The ISC agreed on working mechanisms, including regional and theme sub-committees on Youth; Research; Capacity Building and Training; Advocacy, Communications, Campaigning and Outreach; Media, ICT Policies, Content and Practice.

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