THE GLOBAL CONFERENCE FOR MEDIA FREEDOM

Overview

1. The Global Conference for Media Freedom, co-hosted by the UK and Canada, took place on 10-11 July at Printworks in London. This was the first global Ministerial gathering on the subject. We used the UK’s convening power to bring together delegates from over 100 countries with 60 ministers and over 1500 participants from civil society, academia and the media to consider with us the benefits of a free media able to hold the powerful to account. We also wanted those who routinely target journalists for their work to be aware that the world is watching, and that we and likeminded partners will increasingly be speaking up when journalists are intimidated or attacked. Over the two days there were 25 different panel discussions on a variety of issues around media freedom.

2. The conference formed part of the UK’s central international campaign this year, aiming to shine a global spotlight on media freedom, to change political calculations and increase the costs to those abusing it, as well as to encourage a greater appreciation of the value of an independent media.

3. In their keynote speeches, the Foreign Secretary, Canadian Foreign Minister and former journalist Chrystia Freeland and Special Envoy Amal Clooney set out the challenge to participants to champion media freedom, outlining the problems faced by journalists in countries such as Venezuela, Kazakhstan, Peru, China and Mexico. The Foreign Secretary raised the murders of Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi Arabia and Lyra McKee in Northern Ireland, while Ms Clooney commented on a range of countries across the Middle East, Asia and the Americas but also Slovakia, Malta and Australia following the recent police raids on media premises.

Impact of the Conference

4. Governments participating in the conference demonstrated their support for media freedom, both by their visible presence in turning up and through the commitments and interventions they made during the conference sessions. The conference made a strong case for addressing the rising levels of attacks on journalists and why participants should pay more attention to issues relating to media freedom.

5. The campaign hashtag #DefendMediaFreedom generated over 35,000 mentions over the two days and trended for over 6 hours in the UK and 4 hours in Canada on the first day of the conference, as well as in the Philippines and Peru. There was significant coverage of the plenary sessions and speeches in the UK media and internationally. Photos have been made available on the FCO Flickr account and a selection of session recordings is available on YouTube, including countries’ national statements.

6. The conference has generated significant momentum on which we will aim to build during our leadership of the campaign this year, while also working to ensure it is sustained over coming years. As an example of this impact, many of those present commented that it was the first time that governments, civil society and the media had...
come together around this issue, and that this had generated significant opportunities for sharing best practice and ideas. Others highlighted how welcome it was for so many government ministers to be exposed to arguments on the value of a free media in holding the powerful to account and as a litmus test of a free society.

Sustainability of the Campaign

7. We are working to ensure the sustainability of the campaign by designing it as a five-year programme, led each year by a different country. For this reason we secured the agreement of the Government of Canada to act as co-hosts of the Global Conference. Subject to a Ministerial decision after their upcoming elections, we are also hopeful that they will host a follow up conference next summer. We have already had preliminary discussions with a number of countries about taking on the leadership of the campaign (and hosting a conference) in 2021. The FCO has made a five-year budgetary commitment of £600,000 per year to support the Global Media Defence Fund.

8. We plan to keep the campaign high profile by making the most of key events in the international calendar, for example, holding events each year during UN General Assembly Ministerial Week (September) and on World Press Freedom Day (3 May) and International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists (2 November).

9. Another important element in ensuring the sustainability of the campaign will be the high profile advocacy of the High Level Panel of Legal Experts and the role of Amal Clooney as the Foreign Secretary’s Special Envoy on Media Freedom. Ms Clooney has committed to serving in this role until at least 31 December 2020. She and the panel members will work to ensure the campaign is sustained by the governments and other partners who agree to commit to it. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon discussed further with Ms Clooney how best the FCO could support her in this role on 11 July in follow up to the Media Freedom Conference.

Campaign Initiatives

10. Since our last Memorandum to the FAC in March, we have been working to develop a number of international and UK campaign initiatives to be announced at the conference. As we outlined in that Memorandum, the international framework to protect media freedom is extensive and strong in principle. A great deal of work is already being done by UNESCO to implement the UN Plan of Action on the Safety and Protection of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, by various regional organisations including the Council of Europe and OSCE, and by individual UN Member States through the various “Friends” groups that exist at the UN. Civil Society organisations are also numerous and active, and able to draw on funding from international donors including governments, Luminate (who sponsored travel costs for some speakers and participants at the conference) and the Open Society Foundation. Many states have legislation that protects media freedom. However, a significant gap exists over the political will and practical efforts needed to translate commitments at a multilateral level and legal provisions on paper into concrete actions to tackle impunity and ensure journalists are not prevented from doing their jobs or speaking out.

11. With this in mind, the following package of measures was developed:

International outcomes:
Media Freedom Coalition

We have encouraged governments to sign up to a global pledge, launched in advance of the conference, committing those participating to form a new media freedom coalition to protect media freedom and to lobby on cases of attacks on journalists. In agreement with conference co-hosts, Canada, we have set the bar to entry to the media freedom coalition quite high. Thus far 25 have signed, with another dozen countries signalling interest; membership of the Coalition will be announced in the margins of the UN General Assembly in September.

An International Task Force

We announced the creation of an international task force, involving multilateral organisations and civil society, which will support countries to draw up National Action Plans on the safety of journalists with technical assistance and advice. A number of governments are considering development of such plans. We are working with UNESCO to design the Task Force to provide the best mix of support from the UN, other governments and civil society.

Experience in supporting the implementation of other similar plans (eg the UN Secretary General's Plan of Action on Countering Violent Extremism) demonstrates that encouraging and supporting Member States to draw up National Action Plans or similar national frameworks is a practical way of making concrete progress on an issue.

A National Action Plan should be a comprehensive, practical whole of society plan, developed on the basis of a shared understanding of where the issues are, and agreed and supported by a broad cross-section of stakeholders. The process of drawing up such a plan, supported by national dialogue and assisted by a multi-stakeholder National Committee, can often prove extremely valuable in itself. It can effectively act as a catalyst to bring together governments, civil society, media organisations, lawyers, journalists and communications experts, to help them come to a shared understanding of where the gaps are and to take joint ownership of the changes needed to address them. It can also help to establish sustainable, cross-government structures to take the plan forward. Involving civil society and media organisations in the development and agreement of the plan also ensures that they are well-informed about the aims, objectives and milestones and well linked in to government, which helps them support and also hold governments to account. The UN and OSCE have recommended that all member states consider drawing up such plans and establish national committees to help shape them.

The UK Government will is contributing an initial £100,000 this financial year towards the setting up of the Task Force by allocating part of the funds we are routing through the Global Media Defence Fund, to be administered by UNESCO, and are inviting other partners to contribute (see detail on the Fund below).

High Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom

The first meeting of this independent panel, convened by Special Envoy Amal Clooney and chaired by Lord Neuberger, former President of the UK Supreme Court, took place in the margins of the conference. The panel consists of the following distinguished lawyers:

• Lord David Neuberger, UK (Chair)
The Honourable Irwin Cotler, Canada
Hina Jilani, Pakistan
Dario Milo, South Africa
Amal Clooney, UK (Deputy Chair)
Sarah Cleveland, US
Baroness Helena Kennedy, UK
Nadim Houry, Lebanon
Can Yeğinsu, Turkey/UK
Karuna Nundy, India
Galina Arapova, Russia
Justice Manuel José Cepeda Espinosa, Colombia
Professor Kyung-Sin Park, South Korea
Baroness Françoise Tulkens, Belgium
Ms Catherine Anite, Uganda
Judge Robert D. Sack, US

The High Level Panel of Legal Experts will provide specialist advice and recommendations for legal and other mechanisms that protect and encourage the functioning of a free media and prevent and reverse abuses or violations of media freedom. To do this, the panel will:

1. Propose legal and other initiatives that can be taken by governments to ensure existing international obligations relating to media freedom are enforced and advise on any new international commitments by governments that would help to prevent and reverse media abuses.

2. Disseminate elements for model legislation to promote and protect a vibrant free press.

3. Offer support to governments that want to strengthen legislation or legal mechanisms to improve media freedom, including by:
   - working with relevant state bodies and other organisations to advise on repealing legislation that is outdated or which restricts media freedom,
   - identifying and sharing relevant existing international and regional guidelines and reporting platforms and
   - offering legal support to governments seeking to implement national action plans on the safety and protection of journalists.

4. Add value to inter-governmental efforts by reporting on means of raising the cost to those governments or others who target journalists for their work, including potentially through sanctions, investigatory mechanisms and other legal tools to increase compliance.

The Panel will be independent. It will draw up its terms of reference, organise its schedule of work and publish reports relating to its mandate either on its own initiative or in response to a specific inquiry or request. Although its advice may be prompted by individual cases, it would be inappropriate for the Panel to pursue or assess individual cases (individual members may however still pursue individual cases as part of their separate and independent legal practice). The Panel will identify opportunities for how its work might complement the objectives of the Global Campaign for Media Freedom, where appropriate.
Appointment to the Panel is on an honorary basis. Essential expenses (in line with the UK government’s global expenditure guide) will be covered where a panel member is unable to cover these. Such expenses that arise between July 2019 – December 2020 will be covered by donations to the Global Media Defence Fund.

The Secretariat and research commissioned for the panel will also be funded by voluntary donations to the Global Media Defence Fund. The Secretariat will provide legal, technical and logistics support to the panel, as well as commission research and facilitate coordination with academic centres, civil society and media organisations. The Secretariat is expected to be provided by the International Bar Association Human Rights Institute.

Global Media Defence Fund

This new fund will be administered by UNESCO as a Multi-Partner Trust Fund under the overall umbrella of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. It will complement other ongoing UNESCO initiatives, including the Multi-Donor Programme on Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists. Projects supported by the Fund will be implemented through UNESCO, civil society organisations, media associations and investigative journalism networks.

The full scope of the fund is still being finalised with UNESCO and other prospective donors, but is expected to include:

- Fostering international legal cooperation, as well as the sharing and implementation of best practice for promoting the defence of journalists under attack, with a dual focus on addressing impunity for attacks against journalists as well as providing legal assistance
- Supporting implementation of national protection mechanisms, with a particular focus on the defence of journalists under attack
- Contributing to the development of strategic litigation
- Training journalists, including in investigative journalism skills and personal safety
- Establishing peer support networks for freelance journalists
- Supporting countries in developing National Action Plans through a dedicated Task Force established by UNESCO for this purpose
- Supporting multilateral organisations in sharing and implementing best practice mechanisms to support and defend journalists

The UK has announced a contribution of £3m over 5 years and Canada Can1$m. Other donors are considering contributions – exact amounts to be confirmed.

Funding for the Campaign & Conference

Global Campaign on Media Freedom
The funding allocated by the FCO for the Media Freedom Campaign for the financial year 2019/20 is £4,573,073. The majority, £4,092,073, is an allocation from the FCO's International Fund. The remainder, £481,000, has been provided from FCO administrative budgets allocated to the Multilateral Policy Directorate.

There are some elements of the Media Freedom Campaign that are funded separately. The 60 Chevening Africa Media Freedom Fellowships announced on World Press Freedom Day in May are the most significant, the costs for which are met from Chevening funding. There is also a wide range of ongoing FCO project work supporting Media Freedom around the globe, funded through various budgets including the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund. While this is complementary to the overall aims of the Media Freedom Campaign, and is being pursued in close co-ordination with the Campaign, it is also funded separately.

The majority of internal staff costs, including salary, incurred by work on the Media Freedom Campaign are met from central FCO budgets so are not included in these figures. However, some additional staffing costs – including some travel costs and overtime – will be drawn from this allocation.

Future years’ budgets for media freedom will be allocated as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review and routine FCO budget allocations. Some funds – for example the £600,000 per year UK contribution to the Global Media Defence Fund – have been pre-committed to enable campaign initiatives to be sustained in future years.

Global Conference for Media Freedom

The full cost of the Global Conference for Media Freedom is still being finalised. The current estimate suggests the Conference, and related activity, will have cost £2.55 million.

However not all of this cost will fall to the FCO. Some costs – including translation costs into French required by the Canadian constitution – will be borne by the Government of Canada. Our sponsor Luminate provided £100,000, chiefly to meet travel costs for speakers and participants otherwise unable to attend. Removing these figures leaves an estimated cost of about £2.4 million falling to the FCO.

These figures are exclusive of VAT where that can be reclaimed. They include costs for security measures of approximately £150,000 that fall to the FCO, but do not include security costs falling to the Metropolitan Police or Home Office.

When identifying the best venue and appropriate budget for the conference, the FCO considered a range of options, including government properties such as Lancaster House. However, none was considered able to accommodate the number of participants we wanted to involve or suitable for the type of high-profile, inclusive and interactive event envisaged. While an external event did occasion hire charges, venue hire amounted to less than 5% of overall Conference costs, whereas using an existing government property would have required significant expenditure to convert it into something suitable for the conference. Printworks in Canada Water was assessed as providing the best value-for-money overall. A competitive bidding exercise was conducted for the production company and the tender awarded to Identity.

The remainder of funds not utilised for the conference of around £2 million will be used primarily to fund campaign initiatives, including the Global Media Defence Fund, as well as
activity on media freedom via the FCO network in countries where we assess it can have most impact.

DFID Funding

At the Global Conference for Media Freedom, Minister Baldwin announced:

- A new Protecting Media Freedom programme – Protecting Independent Media for Effective Development (PRIMED), (funding of up to £12 million) which will tackle the roots of the global crisis in independent media, increasing the resilience of independent media to political and economic pressures. It will bring together NGOs, researchers and the private sector to pilot responses to the crisis in viability of independent, public interest media, increasing the resilience of independent media in developing countries to political and economic pressures, piloting approaches in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone.

- The Aswat Horra programme (funding of up to £3m) will help develop new approaches in more restrictive environments. The programme will bring together international advocacy, media, legal and civil society organisations to support freedom of expression and freedom of the media in more challenging contexts. It will focus on fragile countries in the Middle East and North Africa. The programme will directly benefit local civil society organisations, civic activists, infomediaries, media professionals, lawyers and legal defence groups in the target countries through action research, trialling innovations, and scaling effective approaches to building free and open societies.

- The new programmes come on top of the announcement of £12 million made in March 2019 (The 'PROTECT Programme), meaning a total of up to £27 million in new commitments on media freedom this year. Led by Article 19, and focusing on Burma, Kenya and Malawi, this programme will pilot responses to shrinking civic space; pressure on independent media and civil society; and data, transparency and accountability failures in increasingly digital environments.

Media Sustainability

In addition to the above, the UK Government recognises the challenges faced by the media profession in ensuring sustainable financial models for media organisations and journalism. In conjunction with Luminate and BBC Media Action Trust, we have supported the commissioning of a study on future financial models, including options for a possible International Fund, to support media sustainability. Initial thinking and options for these were discussed at the Global Conference.

Countering Disinformation

Linked to the campaign, on 17 July the Foreign Secretary announced a package of £18m over three years to counter disinformation across Eastern Europe and strengthen independent media in the Western Balkans.

The funding from the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) will support freedom of expression and independent local voices in the Western Balkans to boost the creation of balanced, non-biased content.
Building on the experience of the Salisbury incident, the UK has become a global leader in countering disinformation, and recently launched a new training offer for government and public sector officials on spotting and dealing with disinformation, which has also had interest from international governments.

Related announcements:

DCMS announced on 11 July the Government’s decision to establish a **UK National Committee and National Action Plan on the Safety of Journalists**. This is intended to respond to the recommendations of the UN and OSCE and to representations by civil society to ensure UK Government legislation and policies are designed to protect journalism and to provide better support for journalists under threat. It is important that the UK is seen to lead by example as we continue to champion the campaign and encourage other governments to develop such plans. DCMS and the FCO are working across Whitehall to develop the Government response, including with the Home Office to consider policy on visas and asylum. The Secretary of State for DCMS and FCO Minister of State Lord Ahmad held a roundtable discussion on 8 July with civil society organisations on the potential impact of the White Paper proposals on online harms on media freedom.

The Government published its guidance on **support for human rights defenders**.

The Government confirmed its plans to launch an **international human rights sanctions regime** under the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018 once we leave the European Union. This could include action against individuals and governments that abuse human rights, including acts against the media.

1. Press Releases issued at the Global Conference for Media Freedom
   

   https://www.gov.uk/government/news/media-freedom-coalition-launched-to-address-attacks-on-journalists


2. Foreign Secretary’s Speech at the Global Conference

3. Text of the global pledge on media freedom

July 2019