



COMMUNITY
OF DEMOCRACIES

Statement by the Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett on World Press Freedom Day

In commemoration of World Press Freedom Day #WPF, I want to join those Member States and civil society partners of the Community of Democracies acknowledging the role of free, independent and uncensored media as a fundamental component of a healthy democratic landscape and a crucial element of peaceful inclusive societies.

The right of every person to freedom of opinion and of expression and the right of the press to collect, report and disseminate information, news and opinions are key principles of the Community of Democracies' Warsaw Declaration. Journalists across the world serve an important role in promoting and defending human rights and core democratic values. Independent investigative journalism contributes to fighting corruption, ensuring accountability of public institutions and alerting citizens when democratic processes are undermined, and human rights violated.

Too often, in providing public access to information, journalists pay a high price. Declining press freedom, arrests, intimidations and attacks on journalists, with increasing risks towards female journalists, have become a grim reality in many countries across the world. Lack of sufficient protection for media workers is alarming as is impunity for crimes against journalists.

The Community of Democracies today renews its commitment to work towards strengthening and defending the freedom of the press through engagement in multilateral activities as well as its Working Group on Freedom of Expression, which has developed a Toolkit on the Safety of Journalists for the Personnel of Diplomatic Missions to help create a safer environment for journalists and protect the freedom of speech.

In honor of this year's World Press Freedom Day, a special tribute is due to journalists who lost their lives providing information to the public. All governments committed to respect democratic values are urged to step up efforts to defend and enable press freedom and freedom of expression. The principles of freedom of opinion and of expression are not a privilege, but a fundamental human right.