

# **Abuja Declaration on Global Financing for Media and Information Literacy: An imperative to fight against disinformation and build trust**

On the 11th anniversary of Global Media and Information Literacy Week, stakeholders from all over the world unwaveringly reaffirmed the urgency to advancing global financing for media and information literacy development to strengthen people's access to media and information literacy competencies, thereby to fight against disinformation and build trust.

## **Preamble**

Welcoming the 2020 Seoul Declaration on Media and Information Literacy for Everyone and by Everyone: A Defense against Disinfodemics;

Learning from the COVID-19 crisis and the parallel misinformation and disinformation crisis, that Media and Information Literacy can build people's resilience;

Emphasizing Media and Information Literacy for public good on which consensus was reached in Global Media and Information Literacy Week 2021 celebrations hosted by South Africa;

Noting that for the first time, in the 2021 and again in the 2022 celebrations of Global Media and Information Literacy Week, regional intergovernmental organizations including the African Union, Arab League, Asian Cooperation Dialogue, Caribbean Economic Community, European Commission, and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development expressed their commitment to fostering media and information literacy at the regional level and to enhancing global cooperation among stakeholders;

Recognizing that disinformation, distrust and other threats can compromise sustainable development and democratic development. Recent evidence displays a global disengagement, especially among youth<sup>1</sup>, in democratic and governance processes This intersects with three other emergent phenomena:

1. Global surge in disinformation and misinformation erodes trust in institutions, exacerbates polarization, threatens peace and human solidarity, and impacts democratic freedoms;
2. Intensified discrimination, hate and violence on the basis of on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, social or geographical origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other status as established by UN human rights standards, are often fueled by misinformation and disinformation;
3. New restraints on freedom of expression, right to hold opinion including beliefs, ideas, and association around the world.

Further recognizing that increased resources would enable UNESCO to further leverage its capacity to scale up Media and Information Literacy through the Organization's unique opportunities for intra-

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<sup>1</sup> Pew Research Centre, Global Attitudes and Trends, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2018/10/17/international-political-engagement/> Accessed on 20 September 2022.

sectoral, interdisciplinary cooperation (e.g. Media and Information Literacy to enable, freedom of information, freedom of expression, intercultural competencies, global citizenship education, digital citizenship, education for sustainable development, basic science literacy, etc.).

Expressing the need for partnership and multi-stakeholders engagement with relevant institutions such as universities, schools, non-governmental organizations, civil organizations, libraries, media organizations and digital platforms, etc. for the advancement of Media and Information Literacy at local, regional and global level.

Fully embracing the need to advance Media and Information Literacy in formal, non-formal and informal learning and institutions through curriculum interventions and a *UNESCO International Media and Information Literacy Institute* to further collaboration, research, advisory and consultancy for governments, institutions and corporations.

Underscoring the imperative for digital communication platforms and media to commit to the *International Framework for Digital Platforms/Private Companies to Integrate Media and Information Literacy in their Policies, Operations and Products*, which is underway in consultation processes led by UNESCO; ensuring that once it is launched, it is implemented, monitored, evaluated, and updated over time.

Reaffirming the spirit of the development of Media and Information Literacy as set out in previous Declarations including the Grunwald Declaration (1982), the Prague Declaration Towards an Information Literate Society (2003), the Alexandria Proclamation on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning (2005), the Fez Declaration on Media and Information Literacy (2011), the Moscow Declaration on Media and Information Literacy (2012), the Paris Declaration on Media and Information Literacy in the Digital Age (2014), and the Riga Recommendations on Media and Information Literacy in a Shifting Media and Information Landscape (2016), Youth Declaration on Media and Information Literacy (2016), Khanty-Mansiysk Declaration “Media and Information Literacy for Building a Culture of Open Government” (2016), the UNESCO Global Framework for MIL Cities (2018); and Seoul Declaration on Media and Information Literacy for Everyone and by Everyone: A Defence against Disinformation (2020); Molina-Abuja Declaration by the UNESCO MIL Alliance Youth Committee (2022); Plan of Action for Youth Engagement in Media and Information Literacy Policies and Strategies and Access to Information Policies (2020/2022).

**Therefore:**

We, the participants at the 2022 Global Media and Information Literacy Week Feature Conference and Youth Agenda Forum, declare our renewed support to expanding and sustaining media and information for everyone to tackle disinformation and build trust by ensuring global financing of media and information literacy for all.

*We understand*

There is an urgent need to build people's resilience through media and information literacy as a public good for everyone and by everyone, and on the foundation of trust. It is on this basis of global trust that we intend to build a common defense against all forms of disinformation and misinformation.

*We call for*

More robust media and information literacy policies and strategies including accountability checks, regulation and self-regulation on the part of digital platforms and media particularly for content and contract policies. Putting children and youth at the center of media and information literacy policies and strategies policies. Collaborating so that national and sub-national education policies embrace the media and information literacy competencies and tools, and build capacities with a long-term vision of up-skilling future generations.

A cascading the drive on media and information literacy awareness to religious institutions, neighbourhoods and kindergarten play groups on a "Know Your Digital Peers" initiative linking virtual public support boxes that can enhance adequate promotional funding for children and youth media and information literacy enlightenment programmes.

*We urge*

All stakeholders to prioritize media and information literacy as critical thinking for young people, while ensuring their right to free, accurate and youth-friendly information on all the topics and aspects relevant to them. Young people must be involved in the design, leadership, implementation, and assessment of media and information literacy policies and strategies at international, regional, national, and local levels.

Governments around the world to articulate national media and information literacy policies that will serve as a comprehensive guide in articulating the implementation of media and information literacy initiatives across all levels of governance.

Media, information, digital professionals to uphold this Declaration in the delivery of their activities.

We call on all stakeholders (International/bilateral donors, foundations, and intergovernmental organizations, private sector organizations, including media, digital communications platforms, libraries, advertisers, as well as private, public, local and community media as well civil society, including, NGOs, CBO's, the research community, religious and cultural institutions, entertainment industry, etc.) to:

1. give due regard to the *Abuja Declaration on Global Financing for Media and Information Literacy: An imperative to fight against disinformation and build trust* as a development co-operation framework for media and information literacy for all.
2. agree to announce initiatives and commitment on the web platform connected to this Declaration to be set up by UNESCO to facilitate dialogue, synergies and monitoring.

**In this connection, we commit to:**

1. Design and promote new initiatives on Media and Information Literacy to nurture trust in democracy and institutions;
2. Create a *UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Multimedia Platform* which will include free, annotated and curated resources from members of the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Alliance and partners and new specific content designed to help citizens learn how to detect misinformation, as well as the best ways to identify reliable information and sources. The platform will also serve communities of practice and linking all UN Agencies executing work in this area.
3. Develop an ambitious training plan that will include following:
  - Formal agreements with universities around the world
  - Certifications and diplomas in Media and Information Literacy Alliance skills in partnership with UNESCO.
  - Design specific MOOC, NOOC and SPOC with different topics related to Media and Information Literacy (“fake news<sup>2</sup>”, digital ads vs content, AI and algorithms, echo chambers, digital print...)
  - Provide resources for teachers, educators, students, seniors, young people, and general audiences to improve their Media and Information Literacy skills.
4. Support the implementation of a *UNESCO International Media and Information Literacy Alliance Institute* as presently envisioned by partners, and announced by Nigeria, including the UNESCO-UNAOC MILID Network, that will further collaboration, advisory, consultancy and to serve as global observatory on MIL scholarships.
5. Support the set-up of a *UNESCO MIL Schools Connect Programmes/MIL Clubs*- build a network of schools in every part of the world. This will serve as a strong foundation for critical thinking through comprehensive MIL training programs right from early year learners and schools for everyday learning.
6. Expand the UNESCO MIL Alliance to include more civil society networks to encourage and educate on MIL skills beyond formal education, and inclusion of multi-stakeholders at all levels and regions.

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<sup>2</sup> UNESCO prefers to use the terms disinformation and misinformation as the term ‘fake news’ is a contradiction. If it is fake, it is not news.

7. Develop and implement programmes for training MIL multipliers and ambassadors recognized by UNESCO.

**A united call to further commitments and actions:**

We further call upon governments from national to city level, as well as intergovernmental organizations to

1. Allocate specific budgets to the developing of Media and Information Literacy programmes, with respect to the educational laws or any other regulatory framework that guides the workings of its national/regional/local education systems.
2. Make requests for amendments to the audiovisual communications laws, regulating audiovisual communication service providers to promote content or specific programs that can improve MIL abilities within their audiences.
3. Consider setting up national working groups on MIL in connection with relevant ministries or regulatory entities and linked to National Chapters of the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Alliance.
4. Initiate dialogue to articulate, agree and implement a set of standards (using various UNESCO tools and that of other partners), led by Audiovisual authorities/ regulators / license providers, relating to MIL, including online policies, leading to national charters and financial support which would be established within this Declaration.
5. Encourage national broadcasters to join and participate in UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Alliance. For instance commitment from national/public service broadcasters to dedicate 1-2 hours of air-time at least weekly for MIL related activities, and to engage with UNESCO MIL Alliance as well as contributors/supporters/funders/sponsors of the Cooperation Framework
6. Explore cooperation among and between countries to support MIL initiatives at the regional and global levels, including South-South, and South-South-North engagements
7. Create a shared vision so that all the stakeholders work on common goals.
8. Accommodate the concept of MIL City driven by national MIL policies

***We invite civil society, media, youth, academic institutions and researchers to:***

1. Encourage media to work together with academic institutions and other educational stakeholders to organize workshops with journalists, information professionals, news organizations and audiences made up of educators, young people, and seniors in schools and learning spaces, as well as across communities to improve people's skills to critically assess digital content, news and information .
2. Form an enabling "ecosystem of trust" as "army of credible messenger" in co-creating sustainable environment for the proliferation of truth and countering of disinformation
3. Embed media and information literacy programmes across the whole education continuum formulate guidelines that promote the culture of trust across all sectors

***We call on the private sector, including digital communications platforms and media, International/bilateral donors, foundations, and intergovernmental organizations to:***

1. Donate to an International Fund on Media and Information Literacy administered by UNESCO. Every donor company would become a UNESCO MIL ambassador, committed to promoting the need for incorporating citizens' MIL abilities and skills into their communication policies.
2. Create your own MIL strategy under their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies. Contribute and help launch funds to increase media and information literacy, fight disinformation, nurture trust, promote fact checking methods and support learning activities.
3. Invest in the future by adopting MIL campaigns and awareness drives for children and youth
4. Seek collaboration with UNESCO-UNACO MILID Universities in funding research and innovation enterprise that can provide solutions to contemporary technologically inclined challenges fueling disinformation.
5. Consider national dialogue on Media and Information Literacy in the digital and media industries in existing digital and media organizations.
6. Explore private – public partnerships, including engagement with United Nations organizations and other international donor/development partners to popularize Media and Information Literacy in digital spaces and in the media as a business and development model through collaborative and innovative transformative approaches, demand stimulation, content creation, distribution and use.
7. Consider undertaking or initiating with UNESCO a mapping of existing funds allocation and programmes in support of Media and Information Literacy and the empowerment of women and girls in and through digital platforms and the media worldwide.
8. Consider setting up internal committees or focal-points on Media and Information Literacy where these do not exist for interface with UNESCO and partners including Members of the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Alliance.
9. Reflect, within development cooperation programmes and budgets, the links between Media and Information Literacy and the SDGs.
10. Consider sponsoring programmes for promoting Media and Information Literacy enable gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in and through digital platforms and media. This should be led by private sector actors, as part of their corporate strategy.
11. Co-operate internationally to increase dialogue about Media and Information Literacy.

12. Give attention to Media and Information Literacy In any development cooperation programme, corporate outreach and budget.

***We request UNESCO to expand its programmes and role as a leading international organization and policy influencer in the field of Media and Information Literacy, in cooperation with other UN Agencies, to:***

1. Establish and administer an International Fund on Media and Information Literacy
2. Create an International Coalition of Ambassadors advocating for Media and Information Literacy. Recognizing principals from donors (private sector, digital platforms...) to support the Coalition's MIL Ambassadors to develop people's access to MIL skills in order to fight disinformation, while building trust as a key tool for promoting democracy.
3. Work with other UN entities to develop joint programmes to promote MIL for all.
4. Articulate MIL as a component and facilitator of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
5. Undertake a mapping of existing initiatives within UN Agencies/Funds/Programmes to explore/strengthen synergies and reduce potential fragmentation.
6. Collaborate with UN Agencies/Funds/Programmes who are not already doing so for them to consider mainstreaming media and information literacy in their programme and budget as appropriate.
7. Explore a mechanism within the UN for structured interfacing with the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Alliance.
8. Deliberate a coherent One UN approach/strategy to address media and information literacy as a cross-cutting area of the Sustainable Development Goals and beyond.
9. Set up a database of recurring narratives collected across regions and nationalities on hate speech, disinformation and misinformation which will help in unifying decision-making on risks and approaches to mitigation of societal harm and promote peace-building.
10. Prioritize countries with less resources and manpower to fight disinformation and misinformation and enhance institutional capacities where there are deficiencies.