

2019 International Student Summit on Information and Democracy

Wednesday, December 13, 2019

Joint Pledge on Information and Democracy

Students attending the 2019 International Student Summit on Information and Democracy were tasked with writing, debating and ultimately voting on a Joint Pledge, a series of proposals, commitments and priorities that national governments or regional collectives could strive toward. Each regional bloc engaged in hours of debate in order to craft the five regional plans below. Read the varied and creative solutions backed by research and collaboration that were proposed by students from each regional bloc at the Summit.

Americas Region:

Regulation

- Banning of governments from regulating social media content
- Banning of social media corporations from regulating social media content
- Effort to eliminate government social media bots
- 3rd party start-ups/organizations & NGOs fact checkers

Education

- Have the 3rd Party NGO Create a curriculum to teach people how to identify misinformation and how to access reliable information
- NGOs will also provide education on freedom of the press and journalistic safety
- NGO creates a database that allows journalists access of information on safety in countries

Protection

- Lawyers without borders - access to attorneys to represent persecuted journalists in nations; also can provide legal advice
 - *Idea adapted from, Asia Pacific plan*
- NGO database also allows anonymous reporting of dangerous situations

Regional Cooperation, Agreement with Europe and South Asia

Spread awareness of foreign journalist persecution (**Education**)

- CNN and other widely known news stations
- Through memo, not enforced
- Publicize the persecution of Journalists in nations

Become involved and protect citizens in these countries (Protection)

- Potential sanctions on countries committing crimes against Journalists

Regional Cooperation, Agreement with Africa

Support anonymous “watchdog” of media support (Education)

United Nations publishes unbiased article

Europe and Central Asia Region:

1. Need efforts from western countries (CA/US) to spread information among their nations
 - a. Propose to put sanctions on countries that aren't making an effort to protect journalists
2. Create an NGO to allow regulation of misinformation and civil lawsuits
 - a. Create two joint organizations: 1. government organization from UN that ensures protection to journalists by providing legal support to them to protect them from other countries--education on misinformation
 - b. board of trusted professionals
3. Keep government propaganda out of the media
 - a. Needs to be a system of checks and balances between governments
 - b. educational programs school/community will inform people about how to detect misinformation and bias through NGO or government organization
 - c. ban of government use of bots on social media

Middle East and North Africa Region:

1. General Assembly of UN can create unions comprised of journalists (unbiased) which can fact-check and create unbiased content (elected journalists) with regional committees
 - a. recommend sanctions on countries that don't comply
2. UN Council can give journalists international privileges (partial immunity)
3. Recommend laws protecting journalists and discourage government censorship (Nationally)
 - a. potentially recommend sanctions

Africa Region:

As a region, we are incredibly concerned about the lack of internet access in our region, the lack of transparency in the media, the lack of government support and cooperation between media, and a dire need for protection of journalists. African countries are committed to improving the media for countries to foster the free press and access to information for all.

The Watchdog Plan:

- We recommend a multinational, regional news body under the watch of a new UN body: **The United Nations Coalition on Free News and Media**
 1. Spread unbiased information through **anonymous** sources

- a. These sources will remain anonymous to protect journalists from any government censorship and violence.
 - 2. Include a fact checking organization made up of NGOs and local professors who will ensure an unbiased viewpoints.
 - a. It can also be supported by systems of fact checking including warning labels on untrusted sources that will stray consumers away from false information
 - 3. The UN will be affiliated in order to appease the citizens who still trust the government as a form of media
 - a. Many citizens trust the government, so the UN on the byline will appease both parties while still protecting journalists
 - 4. The creation of an alliance of existing grass-roots media organizations who will
 - a. Network and organize in order to protect the access of information for all communities
 - b. Share techniques for keeping journalists safe, preventing the spread of disinformation, and communicating with heads of state
 - c. This would be a low cost plan with almost all of the watch dogs either volunteering or being part of an NGO.
- We urge the creation of an educational hotline run by NGOs
- 1. They will be available in many languages and be in libraries in order to increase access to this education in places with a lack of internet.
 - a. These will aid individuals to gain media literacy in order to identify misinformation in the news
 - b. This grassroots campaign will be a catalyst towards free media available to not just those who can afford it

Asia-Pacific Region:

- 1. Create IGO (GPC - Global Press Coalition) to protect journalist and hold responsible those who harmed journalists
 - a. Form international courts
 - i. Courts of 7 from 7 different countries from 7 different regions across the world within the IGO.
 - 1. Lottery system to select judges.
 - b. Country specific incentives that encourage cooperation.
 - i. Impose sanctions on in-compliant nations as a last resort.
 - 1. Sanctions imposed when countries are non-compliant with basic journalistic rights.
 - 2. Used as an incentive to join the IGO
 - c. Tier system to accommodate different countries' goals and resources

- i. Based on their RSF score (the severity of the situation for journalists).
 - 1. Three levels (Red, Yellow, and Green)
 - a. RED = Most severe Example: China
 - i. Focuses of journalists safety and media censorship.
 - b. YELLOW = Middle tier Example: Japan (moderately severe)
 - i. removing soft censorship and governmental pressure.
 - c. GREEN = Low severity Example: Canada.
 - i. diversity within media and non-governmental harassment.
 - ii. Ultimate goal is to end state controlled content.
 - 1. Not state subsidised media (BBC, NPR)
 - d. Funded by member nations.
 - i. Done in order to promote GPC operations.
2. Create NGO (w/ dedicated fact-checkers) to fact-check articles and encourage government transparency
(a way to hold the IGO accountable)
 - a. Creating independent NGO that would fact-check and distribute news (anonymous reporters)
 - i. neutral news force that would bring attention to issues within the region or country.
 - b. NGO could flag/regulate mis/disinformation
 - c. Run educational campaigns.
 - i. Created in order to raise awareness on mis/dis information.
 - 1. Social media ads, etc.