



## M20 Johannesburg Declaration

### **Media Summit urges global prioritisation of information integrity for the public good**

#### **Preamble**

Global and local representatives of the media attending the M20 Summit, convened in Johannesburg by the South African National Editors' Forum and Media Monitoring Africa, have come together during the 2025 South African presidency of the G20, to sound an acute alarm.

We are responding to a moment of profound global crisis in the integrity of information, peace and respect for human rights, including environmental rights. We hereby alert our media colleagues, the G20 and the wider public: the crisis is intensifying as the spaces for independent news media and civic engagement contract.

Democratic societies grow through the supply of reliable information in a timely manner. Yet today we witness widescale erosion of our sources of knowledge. Our conviction is that independent journalism is a vital public good, and fundamental to people's right of access to information and to the sustenance of peace and democratic governance.

We affirm that information integrity is essential to sustaining democracy and advancing the G20's 2025 goals of international solidarity, equality and sustainable development.

Our call is an injunction to everyone to do more to protect press freedom, and support the role of journalism, and a human rights-based media ecosystem in its contribution to the public good.

We call for significant steps to ensure that independent journalism and media pluralism are strengthened and information integrity is secured. Inaction and a 'business-as-usual'



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approach will not only allow current troubling trends to persist but will also cause them to worsen, especially in a world heading towards more armed conflict, authoritarianism, and a climate emergency. Failing to prioritise media freedom and viability as well as information integrity can lead to an erasure of information ecosystems, creating drastic threats to economic, safety and overall civil stability.

## **The challenge**

The dramatic shrinkage in the media landscape, linked to the decline in financial viability and weakening democratic credentials in many countries, leaves space for disinformation, including harmful content generated with artificial intelligence. This phenomenon creates doubts, hinders policy actions, and divides society. Mis- and disinformation are being amplified by AI platform algorithms and reintegrated as training data for new AI models, further perpetuating a downward spiral in the quality of information. This wider content environment exacerbates other intensifying challenges to information integrity. The world already suffers the effects of media censorship and political interference, lawfare, as well as assaults, killings and persecution of journalists. We're seeing the consequences in declining international co-operation, in the disempowering of younger people (teenagers and children), erosion of women's right to equality, and in a failure to invest in media and information.

## **Our context and our opportunity**

The M20 is a parallel independent initiative to the G20. As a broad alliance, we have come together to promote journalism as a public good, as a key to information integrity and G20 goals.

To this end, M20 participants have compiled a set of policy briefs and convened in Johannesburg on 1-2 September, 2025 to build consensus and a common voice around broad fundamentals. These steps follow previous media initiatives during G20 processes hosted in Brazil (2024) and India (2023). The official G20 baton is to be handed to the United States in 2026.

This M20 Declaration is a result of a collaborative global discussion and a foundation for further information-sharing to ensure that the G20 integrates information integrity, press freedom and media sustainability into a broader development financing architecture.

This Declaration builds on and supports existing global frameworks, including the [Windhoek Declaration of 1991 on a Free, Pluralistic and Independent African media](#), and the [Windhoek+30 Declaration of 2021 on Information as a Public Good](#). It is aligned to the UN's [Global Principles for Information Integrity](#), which recognise an independent, free and pluralistic media as one of five pillars. It welcomes the focus on information Integrity in the G20 2024 [Digital Economy Working Group Maceio Ministerial Declaration](#), and encourages the 2025 G20 to continue giving attention to this priority subject.



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Our declaration below calls upon media and partners, and then upon G20 leaders, to take urgent steps to respond to the information integrity crisis.

**Our call on media and civil society – as well as other stakeholders such as independent information regulatory bodies and business entities, to act on:**

***# Information integrity, to***

- Commit to reinforcing the highest standards of journalism ethics to act as a counterbalance to attacks against information integrity.
- Uncover disinformation campaigns, including AI mistakes and deepfakes, and provide access to reliable information to the public.
- Raise the issues of accountability of technology companies for the design of their AI tools, including fixing flaws and responding to user feedback, especially when it relates to harmful content towards the journalism community.
- Empower, celebrate, promote, and spotlight independent media by supporting and raising awareness around key annual events:
  - [World News Day](#) and the [International Day for Universal Access to Information](#) on 28 September.
  - [Global Week for Media and Information Literacy](#), on 24-31 October.
  - [World Press Freedom Day](#) on 3 May.
- Share solutions to the “perfect storm” of the challenges ranging across information integrity, media capture and capitulation, journalists’ safety, media viability, platforms and AI, children’s and young people’s rights and the climate emergency.
- Recognise that coordinated disinformation campaigns are amplified across multiple languages and diaspora networks, often state-sponsored, requiring targeted cross-border and multilingual responses. Addressing these threats demands inclusive digital governance consistent with the Global Digital Compact, including connectivity, prevention of internet fragmentation, and protection of data privacy.

***# Artificial Intelligence, to***

- Unite to call for clear copyright and fair compensation rules for the use of journalistic content by AI companies, and develop common criteria for calculating fair value.
- Reframe AI as a story about power, not just technology and hype: keeping tabs on who controls and deploys AI systems, how decisions are made, and what impacts result.

- Promote AI literacy that is grounded in rights-based, intersectional and ethical perspectives.
- Follow the money and data, including examining how gaps in African and Global South affect AI development.
- Adopt and promote cross-regional AI frameworks grounded in human rights, democratic values and accountability.
- Ensure that AI frameworks support linguistic and cultural diversity, including low-resource and indigenous languages, and invest in open-source models and local datasets so that smaller nations and island states are not excluded from AI development. These measures should be complemented by AI governance principles set out in the Global Digital Compact.

### **# Media viability, to**

- Inform and engage audiences to strengthen trust and willingness to support media viability.
- Report on the growth in news wastelands in order to raise awareness about the impact on access to information and how the dominant digital services, including AI “answers” and “community notes”, are not a substitute for verified, up-to-date reporting.
- Recognise that the collapse of journalism revenue models is not solvable by innovation alone, as important as this is. It is symptomatic of broader market failure and disruption due to platform dominance, unchecked data extraction and algorithmic bias, which require policy responses.
- Call on G20 states to pursue competition law reform to deal with market dominance, oligarchic control and equitable taxation of digital platforms, and ensure ways to redistribute value to sustain public interest media.

### **# Safety, to**

- Campaign to stop physical and online violence and intimidation against journalists all over the world, and demand justice for targeted colleagues.
- Call for an end to the deliberate targeting of journalists during armed conflict, and specifically express solidarity with Palestinian colleagues targeted by the Israeli military, and demand immediate fulfillment of [UN Security Council Resolution 2222](#), which was [co-sponsored by Israel](#) in 2015, and which insists on an end to impunity for those who attack journalists during armed conflicts. Further, insist that Israel immediately allow foreign media access to Gaza.

- Condemn cases in all countries where there is persistent impunity for the killings of media workers, targeting of independent media, and state-sponsored online harassment of journalists.
- Support the [International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists](#), 2 November, as an occasion to demand safety for media workers and justice.
- Demand an end to online violations of human rights, and build pressure on tech companies to be held accountable where they do not take meaningful measures in their actions, tools, products and services.
- Help ensure, in the case of news media companies, the safety of journalists and to develop gender-awareness safety protocols in newsrooms to respond to online violence.
- Support exiled journalists, including opposing the surveillance of this community.
- Support a global ban on the use of spyware against journalists and an end to the use of criminal charges and lawsuits against journalists.

#### **# Women and media, to**

- Adopt and implement the [Kigali Declaration](#) on the Elimination of Gender Violence in and through Media in Africa by 2034
- Address and counter technology facilitated gender-based violence experienced disproportionately by women and LGBTQ+ journalists.
- Open the space for more representation of women in leadership roles in the media industry, and fund women-led independent media organisations

#### **# Children, young people (teenagers) and marginalised groups, to commit to**

- Increase ethical coverage of children's and young people's issues, especially as regards their exploitation on and by digital platforms. Cater to younger audiences and promote human rights standards that protect and empower them.
- Recognise children's and young people's rights to accurate information by strengthening media and information literacy, amplifying child voices.
- Advocate for the urgent safeguards for AI technologies to ensure they are accountable, transparent, and developed with children's and young people's voices, cultural contexts and rights at the centre. Empower children and young people to navigate the digital media space.
- Advocate for AI systems and content to prioritise children's rights, safety, privacy, and developmental needs, with special attention to inclusivity for children with disabilities

and meaningful inclusion of children's voices in AI design, development, and regulation.

**Our call on G20 leaders to include in their final declarations to act on:**

**# Information integrity**

**For the Heads of State declaration,** wording that recognises that:

- Integrity is damaged by coordinated disinformation campaigns, AI errors, biases, and undisclosed deepfakes.
- A supportive environment for journalism can help counter such risks by exposing problems and producing reliable, quality content, and recognising that independent journalism and public interest media are essential to ensuring access to relevant, timely, local, multilingual, and fact-based information. To that end, strengthening their independence and sustainability must be a key priority in order to preserve their vital role, in line with the commitments 35(b) and (c) of the [Global Digital Compact](#).
- Severe threats to trust and the digital economy arise when information integrity is damaged by coordinated disinformation campaigns, AI errors, biases, and undisclosed deepfakes.
- Sustainable systems are needed for compensation for media content feeding AI systems and platforms' business models, and that the G20 will build on its 2024 acknowledgement of intellectual property issues.
- The Compact's broader commitments to universal connectivity, data privacy, and the prevention of internet fragmentation, as these digital foundations directly shape the integrity of the information ecosystem.

**For the Digital Ministers' declaration:** wording that recognises that:

- News media can play a critical role in exposing disinformation and in producing information of high integrity and promoting societies' access to information.
- Journalism and independent media are key in exposing illicit financial flows, as outlined in the [FFD4 Sevilla Commitment](#), and promote transparency, accountability, and public engagement in development financing, while securing the resources required to carry out such investigative reporting work.
- In times of increased AI-generated content, there is value in fostering free and independent public-interest journalism as a critical resource for information integrity.



- Because AI companies scrape news media content, it is essential to ensure fair compensation for the value added to these businesses and to digital distribution platforms.

## **# Artificial Intelligence:**

**For the G20 Heads of State declaration**, wording that recognises the need to:

- Support and fund independent reviews of AI systems for their impact on news and information integrity
- Invest in Global South innovation, including media-led efforts to develop culturally and linguistically inclusive AI tools tailored to local needs.

**For the declaration by G20 Digital Ministers, and the declaration of ministers in the G20 Artificial Intelligence, Data Governance and Innovation for Sustainable Development**, wording that recognises:

- The role of independent media in monitoring AI governance and corporate practices, and that stronger transparency mechanisms can help to enable public-interest media scrutiny of these systems in both public and private sectors.
- Access to information laws need to be fit for purpose and apply to data in both public and private sectors where public interest considerations apply and where protection of relevant rights like privacy and intellectual property are respected.

**# AI in Africa:** Wording by appropriate G20 actors that recognises that:

- Sustainable AI development in Africa requires robust accountability mechanisms that prevent the entrenchment of technological dependencies, and the need to support initiatives that enhance African media organisations' capacity for quality coverage of AI governance and corporate behaviour.
- AI developers and deployers should consider high-quality contemporary data and linguistic and cultural diversity, and commit to supporting AI systems that serve African languages and contexts, rather than marginalising them.

## **# Media viability and media freedom**

**For the Heads of State Declaration**, wording that recognises the importance of:

- Public interest journalism and information integrity as essential public goods. Independent, economically viable media are indispensable to sustainable development and to safeguarding societies against misinformation and disinformation.
- Accordingly, the Declaration should commit to the creation of public funding models for journalism, comparable to those that support other public goods, while ensuring strong guarantees of editorial independence and universal access to reliable

information. Supporting media viability in this way is not optional — it is foundational to the health of our democracies and economies.

- Protecting intellectual property rights to ensure fair compensation.
- Supporting independent media through a legal, fair, transparent, and equitable basis, and with safeguards against real or perceived ways of influencing editorial content.
- Safeguarding the editorial independence of public media institutions and preventing capture of regulatory bodies, funding mechanisms, and public advertising systems.
- Protecting journalists and media workers from violence, harassment, and undue legal or economic pressure, including robust protection of journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in situations of armed conflicts, in line with the decision 35(f) in the [Pact for the Future](#).
- Promoting environments where free, plural, and independent media can thrive, thereby reinforcing democratic governance, fostering economic growth, promoting social cohesion, and building peaceful societies.

## **# Climate crisis and information integrity**

**For the Heads of State Declaration**, wording that recognises:

- The importance of access to free, effective, understandable, accessible information and from pluralistic information sources on climate change and environmental issues;
- The need to bolster efforts to ensure the safety of environmental journalists, access to scientific and evidence-based information online and to address the root causes of climate disinformation and climate change denialism.

**For the Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group Ministerial Declaration**, wording that recognises that:

- Timely access to high-quality, trustworthy, evidence-based and accessible information is essential to promote climate and environmental sustainability.
- In times of coordinated and well-financed climate disinformation and attacks, there is a need to promote safety for environmental journalists.

## **# Safety**

**For the Heads of State Declaration**, wording that recognises:

- Deep concern at the unprecedented rise in physical and online assaults on journalists, and condemnation of these acts as violations of international law and fundamental human rights.



- The need to strengthen and enhance efforts to ensure the safety and protection of journalists, uphold media independence, and foster an environment where media professionals can carry out their vital work without fear or intimidation, let alone being targeted in war and subjected to generalised starvation. (The internationally agreed framework is set out in the 2012 UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and its guidance on creating multi-stakeholder mechanisms to protect the press).
- Call on governments to recognise and respond to the [global commemoration](#) of the [International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists](#) and support international mechanisms designed to secure accountability.
- Combat the use of SLAPPs and other forms of legal harassment aimed at silencing journalists, whistleblowers, and watchdogs. Support measures to prevent misuse of legal systems to suppress public interest journalism.
- Special attention must be given to countries where journalist killings, digital lawfare, and coordinated troll harassment campaigns are rising. Governments should be urged to give institutional support to the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

**For the Digital Ministers' Declaration:** wording that recognises:

- The need to develop and implement robust regulatory and safety frameworks that require digital platforms to undertake human rights diligence of their tools, products and services.

## # Rights of Women Journalists

**For the Heads of States Declaration,** wording that recognises the importance of:

- Supporting independent media in creating enabling environments for its women media workers, including the development and implementation of gender policies.
- Learning from the forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence experienced by women journalists, to ensure these are not replicated and further exacerbated through AI, taking on the responsibility, alongside the tech platforms to actively work towards prevention of this.
- The unique experiences of women journalists regarding online and offline harassment and the forms of gendered harms and structural inequalities they contend with.

**For the Digital Ministers' Declaration:** wording that recognises:

- The need to proactively regulate and place the onus on tech platforms to protect women journalists from technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

## #Rights of children and young people

**For the Heads of States Declaration**, wording that recognises:

- Vulnerabilities faced by children and teenagers in the digital environment, and a commitment to promoting formal mechanisms for their participation in digital policy-making processes.
- The need to prioritise children's and young people's rights and participation frameworks to ensure alignment with international human rights standards, as well as legal and regulatory measures to ensure accountability.

**For the Digital Ministers' Declaration**, wording that recognises:

- The urgent need to promote and support digital platforms' adoption of child-rights-based safety standards, which include age-appropriate child safety by design, transparent moderation, algorithmic accountability, accessible reporting tools, and clear measures taken to prohibit predictive profiling of minors. Media and information literacy must be integrated into educational systems, especially for low-income countries and communities. Take urgent, coordinated action to ensure digital environments are safe for children and young people globally, by adopting globally aligned legislation and standards grounded in safety-by-design principles and informed by the lived experiences of survivors and children to ensure proactive, not reactive, protections.

## Moving forward

This inaugural M20 declaration champions the value of journalism as a public good. We highlight that information integrity is at a critical juncture, and that what happens in journalism can be of decisive significance. We affirm that immediate and impactful actions are essential to reverse the decline and seize opportunities.

We propose establishing a Media Integrity Monitoring Framework to track annual G20 commitments on information integrity, journalist safety, and media viability. An M20-linked Integrity Index would help institutions benchmark progress and promote accountability.

Our call is to all who share this broad perspective to reinforce their efforts to uphold free, independent and viable journalism as a condition for societal progress, and to continue M20 networking beyond 2025.

*Note: The M20 Johannesburg Declaration was compiled by Sanef and MMA with input from [partners](#), drawing extensively from policy briefs published as part of the M20 process and which culminated in the endorsement of the Declaration at the M20 Summit on 1 and 2*



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September. Please see [here](#) for the full set of policy briefs, including proposed text for the G20 declarations.

*The Declaration is endorsed by the following organisations:*

1. South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF)
2. Media Monitoring Africa (MMA)
3. The Africa Editors' Forum (TAEF)
4. African Women in Media
5. Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD)
6. Indonesian Cyber Media Association (AMSI)
7. Wits Centre for Journalism, Wits University
8. African Women in Media
9. Henry Nxumalo Foundation
10. Impress: the independent monitor for the press (UK)
11. Mtoto News International
12. Eastern Africa Editors Society
13. Forum on Information and Democracy
14. Press Council of South Africa
15. Initiative18 - free, safe & sustainable media
16. Centre for Innovation and Technology
17. Panos Institute Southern Africa
18. NMT Media Foundation
19. International Fund for Public Interest Media
20. The Campaign for Free Expression
21. Fondation Hirondelle
22. Freedom of Expression Institute
23. BBC Media Action
24. AmaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism
25. Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication(BNNRC)
26. RNW Media
27. Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC)
28. Kenyan Editors Guild
29. fraymedia Foundation
30. All Protocol Observed, publisher of The Continent
31. International Media Support (IMS)
32. The Brave Movement
33. West Africa Editors Society
34. SABC Channel Africa



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35. MISA Lesotho
36. Daily Maverick
37. North West University, Journalism and Media Studies
38. West Africa Editors Society
39. Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA)
40. The Momentum - Journalism and Tech Task Force
41. The Wire (India)
42. The South African Information Regulator
43. Technology Policy & Innovation (TPI) Concentration, Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs
44. Association of Independent Publishers
45. Freedom Forum, Nepal.
46. Develop AI
47. Campaign on Digital Ethics (CODE)
48. South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC)
49. SOS Support Public Broadcasting Coalition



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