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G20 takes up media-related concerns

This week, the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) and Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) handed over the [Johannesburg Declaration](#) to Solly Malatsi, South Africa's Minister of Digital and Communication Technologies, in Cape Town. The M20 Declaration was formally handed over to Malatsi on the sidelines of this week's G20 meetings.



Pictured from left to right: William Bird (MMA), Minister Solly Malatsi and Sbu Ngwala (SANEF)

Earlier in September, Malatsi was the keynote speaker at the M20 Summit, hosted by the two organisations. Media-related recommendations to the G20 were crystallised at the M20 Summit, which attracted global delegates. The Summit participants agreed on the [Johannesburg Declaration](#), which has been signed so far by 63 media and support organisations across scores of countries, and which remains open for further endorsements.

Meeting in Cape Town this week, two ministerial-level working groups of the G20 concluded their business with statements that dovetail with proposals to them which originate in work by SANEF and MMA.

The G20 brings together the world's top 20 economies, as well as the African Union (AU) and European Union (EU), and is being hosted by South Africa in 2025 under the theme of "solidarity, equality and sustainability".



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Finalised on Tuesday, 30 September, the Chair's statement from the G20 Task Force on AI, data governance and innovation (AITF) noted “the constructive role played by civil society and engagement groups, the B20, T20 and M20”.

In the parallel G20 Digital Economy Working Group (DEWG), the Chair's statement also expresses appreciation for external “contributions and recommendations” of groups, explicitly naming the M20 and B20 among others. The B20 (Business 20) was a strong partner of the M20 summit.

This is the first time in the G20's two-decade-old history that there has been a reference to the M20.

The DEWG statement also acknowledges media in one of its sentences: “Digital literacy and skills for online users are also important to ensure greater awareness of deepfakes, and to promote online safety, leveraging on the important role of the media in alerting the public about these issues.”

This value-adding role by media is highlighted in the Johannesburg Declaration, which further deals with challenges and opportunities of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)

Similarly, the DEWG statement records that: “The rapid development of GenAI offers remarkable opportunities but also carries considerable risks, particularly through the creation of harmful and inappropriate content, deepfakes, nonconsensual explicit material, and fraudulent schemes.

“Those risks tend to affect people who may be in vulnerable situations, such as children, youth, girls, women, persons with disabilities, and the elderly.”

Concern with the rights of children and of women journalists, who are often abused with deepfaked and other sexual imagery, is also a notable feature of the M20's Declaration.

The DEWG statement records that “AI-systems also can be misused to manipulate public perception, disseminate misinformation, disinformation and enable identity theft, affect the cohesion of societies and erode trust in institutions and individuals.” It registers concern about “the continued and growing threat of abuses to information integrity, online safety and the digital economy”.

Core to the M20 is the importance of information integrity to societies, in which the role of professional journalism in producing verified and reliable news is fundamental.

Noteworthy from an M20 point of view is that the AITF Chair's statement calls for AI systems to respect local ownership and intellectual property rights, including copyrights. This is a point that is stressed in the M20 Declaration, which reflects media problems with AI companies scraping news content without consent or compensation.

Also resonating with the M20 Declaration is the DEWG Chair statement recording that the Ministers committed to advancing open data as a public good, as well as encouraging private sector data holders to make available data sets and contribute to public data sets.

Similarly, the G20 DEWG text intersects with other M20 concerns by committing to “address algorithmic bias as well as to foster transparency to promote accountability, explainability, reliability and human oversight”.



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While both G20 statements mention human rights, they do not directly call for press freedom or the safety of journalists, although these are significant calls from the M20. Another G20 silence is on the need to support media viability.

As the M20 builds on its achievements to date, further efforts will be mounted in order to plug the gaps as the G20 continues.

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About M20

The [M20](#) is an independent global initiative to ensure issues relating to media integrity and healthy information ecosystems are reflected in the G20 policy agenda.

The M20 mirrors official G20 engagement groups for business, think-tanks, civil society among others, and includes participation in G20 events, convenings of media and information ecosystem role players, hosting of webinars on G20-related issues and publishing policy briefs. It draws on the participation of researchers, experts and networks of international media development organisations and relevant think tanks, civil society, and media organisations among G20 members, as well as from across the African continent.

More info: the [M20 Summit live coverage](#), [the policy briefs](#), and [who is involved in the M20](#), including the international advisory group.



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