

## **Statement by the Association of Caribbean Media Workers to mark World Press Freedom Day 2023**

Greetings to all media workers across the Caribbean on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day being observed on May 3.

The theme of this year's World Press Freedom Day- "Shaping a Future of Rights: Freedom of expression as a driver for all other human rights"- throws the spotlight on the invaluable role of the freedom to receive and impart ideas.

2023 also mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the mandate of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights

Freedom of Expression is not only enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but is listed as a fundamental right in many of our constitutions in the Caribbean. Indeed, a small number of countries have gone a step further and have enshrined press freedom.

World Press Freedom provides an opportunity to focus on the immense importance and connection of freedom of expression to all other human rights such as education, health, freedom of movement, rest and leisure, and the free will of the people to elect their leaders.

In the absence of freedom of expression, more often than not through the media, the public cannot be properly educated and informed about the other human rights to which they are entitled.

Therefore, the Association of Caribbean Media Workers (ACM) urges Caribbean decision-makers to utilise the rapid advances in Social Media as a mass communication tool to facilitate the two-way flow of information on all public interest subjects that touch and concern the many facets of the other human rights. The ACM takes a dim view of the increasing practice of

decision-makers, especially those in the political sphere, who have resorted to one-way communication through Tweets and Facebook video and text posts. This approach appears to be a clear avoidance of scrutiny at press conferences and interviews. We urge an end to such a practice that robs the public of details that will potentially allow them to make rational decisions. These deficiencies in freedom of expression are leading to dysfunctional societies.

With the proliferation of Social Media and all its attendant ills of misinformation and disinformation, the ACM's unwavering position is that there is invaluable space for journalism as means of freedom of expression.

Professionally practiced to ensure accuracy and fairness; journalism is the only conduit to cultivate the public as change agents for transparency, good governance and accountability.

On behalf of the executive and members of the ACM as well as all other media workers across the Caribbean, the ACM urge all of us to be vigilant and guard against new laws, regulations and practices that violate the tenet of freedom of expression.

ENDS

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