



*International Association of Broadcasting*

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## **IAB - POSITION REGARDING THE WORLD SUMMIT ON INFORMATION SOCIETY**

The International Association of Broadcasting – IAB - is an Organization that has as its institutional members different private radio and television associations from the Americas and Europe, and hundreds of television channels and radio stations as its individual members.

It was founded in 1946 and today represents more that 17,000 private broadcasting stations.

IAB permanently defends Freedom of Expression and Thought, in order to foster the collaboration of broadcasters in activities of public interest and social service. Among the other objectives of IAB is its contribution to enhance the cultural knowledge of peoples and their social and economic development; advocate in favor of the establishment of standard legal norms to protect private broadcasting activities; application of professional ethical norms for broadcasters; exercise the representation and defense of the interests of private broadcasting stations and, on their behalf, discuss matters with official or private organs and finally, foster all type of continental, regional and national meetings on issues of interest to the broadcasting community.

IAB principles have remained dynamic over more than five decades, and they have been gathered in the Declaration approved by the Extraordinary General Assembly held in Buenos Aires, Argentina on June 7, 1985.

### **DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES**

1) That the existence of free private broadcasting operating as a medium of free expression to ensure a variety of information, constitutes an essential element for the existence of a free society.

2) That the free access to information of the individual, and hence of the communication media, must be ensured and strengthened.

3) That inasmuch as the practice of journalism is the exercise of an individual right, it may not be subject to any restriction in its coverage of news and that the same rights apply to the print media as well as all electronic media.

4) That it is the sole responsibility of those in the communication media to establish principles of ethics ruling their own activity.

5) That commercial broadcasting should be privately owned and competitively operated as an activity in the public interest.

6) In respect of the frequencies assigned to broadcasters, governments should limit their authority to distribution and administration of the broadcast spectrum.

### **Private Radio and Television, Instrument of Freedom and Democracy .**

In all the countries and regions where the establishment of private, free and independent radio and television channels has been allowed, media have been strengthened, a factor that must exist in order to keep Democracy and Fundamental Rights in force.

- Independent media are the organs through which Freedom of Expression is made known.

- Free and independent media constitute an essential factor in the relationship established between the government, the political parties and the different groups and sectors of society, fostering the formation of public opinion.

- This mediation exercised by news media through their expressly institutionalized role, is essential not only to ensure consolidation but also the permanence and continuity of the democratic system.

- The absence of Freedom of Expression restricts the freedom of the citizen, something that is only perceived when it does not exist anymore. Thus, it is of vital importance to fight on a permanent basis for it to become fully effective.

The full effectiveness of Freedom of Expression lies in the existence of media that, under a free competition and plurality regime, exercise their functions with economic independence, strengthening the credibility that will make them worthy of people's trust.

All intent to impose controls on the contents of the programs infringes one of the most important broadcasting (radio and television) freedoms, such as the right to prepare their own programs.

Public opinion is the arbitrator of truth. With its daily choice, it decides which media it supports or rejects in accordance with the credibility they deserve. It is essential to trust it to do so and one must preserve its will to do it, so that through this free choice one may ensure that pluralism remains in force in our society.

### **World Summit on the Information Society – WSIS -**

The importance of the electronic media in the modern world, their clear impact on all development processes, as well as the large technological changes occurring constantly, place broadcasting into a new century in a far-reaching and important position for the future of all mankind.

Private and Free Broadcasting contributes in an exemplary manner towards international and cultural diversity comprehension, building roads of Freedom that are also the roads of Respect, Tolerance and Peace.

The WSIS is an extraordinary opportunity to allow the international community to strengthen the Freedom of Expression and Thought.

IAB considers that the Information Society cannot and will not be able to keep away from the ruling principle consecrated in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, regarding the Fundamental Right of Freedom of Expression.

It is on the basis of this Article 19 that other pillars essential for freedom of expression to exist are established, such as pluralism of ideas and opinions, founded on the existence and the setting in motion of a free and independent media.

IAB considers that these principles are also extensive to the new ICTs, and that Information Society must be based on clear-cut concepts of Freedom, without any confusing terminologies or criteria that could promote restrictive concepts to the free flow of information and arbitrary control mechanisms on the media.

In this framework, we have proposed that the Program, Contents and Principles of the World Summit on the Information Society should include the following two principles:

**1. “The need for the absolute respect for the principles of Freedom of Expression and Information as stated in art. 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and article 10 of the Declaration of Sophia, UNESCO 1997, ratified by the General Conference in that year”**

**2. “The need for the acknowledgement of the submission to any initiative to the basic principle of legality, with full respect for the laws and regulations that govern the administration of frequencies as the only form to guarantee the effective and ordered use of the possibilities new and old technologies offer”.**