



Remarks for
Minister of Information Communication
and Technology
Hon. Stanley M. Simataa
On the Occasion of World Press Freedom
Day.

8 May 2018
Safari Court Hotel

- Dr. Jean Pierre Ilboudo, UNESCO Head of Office and Representative to Namibia
- Ambassadors and Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Mr. Stanely Similo, Director General of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC)
- Ms. Gwen Lister, Executive Chairperson, Namibia Media Trust (Publisher of *The Namibian* newspaper)
- Representatives from Media Houses, Network of Journalists & Press Associations
- Invited Guests,
- Ladies & Gentlemen,
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GOOD MORNING.

I am pleased to address you today on this belated occasion of the World Press Freedom Day 2018, under the theme: **Keeping Power in Check, Media, Justice and the Rule of Law.**

Freedom of opinion and expression are fundamental rights of every human being. I believe we all can agree that being able to express one's opinion is about dignity and personal fulfilment.

Freedom to express one's opinion, freedom of the media, and access to information are key fundamentals of democracy and the rule of law. Having open frank and informed debate contributes to a vibrant, dynamic, peaceful and stable society.

The idea that led to the realization of World Press Freedom Day (WPFDD), was birthed in Namibia in 1991 through the Windhoek Declaration. Last week, I had the privilege to attend the global event that returned once more to the African continent where it all started, but this time in Accra, Ghana.

World Press Freedom Day serves as an opportune occasion for nations to take stock of the prevailing media landscape nationally and globally, appreciate progress that has been made in advancing media freedom and recommit to decisively create the desired environment that is conducive to allow media to do what they do best which is to inform the citizenry, to monitor progress made in different dimensions of development and to also hold accountable those vested with various responsibilities.

Having consciously embedded freedom of expression and freedom of the media in our constitution, Namibia continues to be a beacon of hope continentally and globally in upholding the freedom of the press. Over the past 28 years, no journalist or media houses have been persecuted. Media pluralism has been achieved as evidenced by the establishment of several public and private media institutions.

The existence of a free and pluralistic media in our country has cemented the political will of our people, it has deepened accountability and above all serves as a bedrock for good governance.

That notwithstanding however, more still needs to be done. The country's recent decline in the rankings released by Reporters Without Borders, is a cause for concern. Our desire to top the global rankings in terms of media freedom still burns. It is for this reason that the Ministry will soon sanction a thorough review and analysis of what has led to our steady decline in the global rankings over the past two years with a view to devise appropriate interventions that will see our country once again break into the top 20, subsequently top 10.

Yes, I have stated on several occasions that Namibia will do everything possible to expedite the finalisation of the pending Access to Information Bill. While the outstanding Bill has been cited as one of the key factors to have contributed to our decline in the rankings, it remains doubtful whether it would have had such an impact, more so given the fact that over the years Namibia has consistently retained the number one spot in Africa even in the absence of this bill.

On a day like this, the media fraternity should also appreciate and address the collateral damage occasioned by the proliferation of Fact news on social media platforms. A large portion of such news is loaded with venomous vilification of individuals and institutions alike.

Without being seen as if we are suppressing freedom of expression, shouldn't we as mainstream media find legitimate ways to isolate such incidents? Our inalienable right to access information, comes with sacred responsibilities and accountability. Peddling inaccurate information has the debilitating effect of misleading members of our society. It has the consequence of inadvertently inducing members of the public to take decisions based on the wrong set of information.

In the same vein, on a day like this, the media fraternity should also reflect on their effectiveness in carrying out their mandate.

Given the dearth of experienced media personal, concerted efforts should be made to build the capacity of the emerging brigade of young journalists. This obviate advance the chorus of perceived inaccurate and biased reporting thereby ensuring adherence to the existing code of ethics and conduct. I wish all stakeholders fruitful celebrations and am looking forward to participating in the panel that will further digest issues related to the theme of this year's celebrations.

Thank you!