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Central Africa: Press freedom threatened in DRC

On the 57th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights on December 9, the NGO, *Journalistes en Danger* (JED) and the Central Africa Media Organisation's (OMAC) alert network published their 2005 report on press freedom in Central Africa. The report starts with what it calls a "state of emergency for the Congolese press", and continues with an overview of the press in other countries in the region.

In 2005, DRC had the highest incidence of attacks on journalists and the media, with OMAC cataloguing 108 attacks on press freedom and 58 arrests. According to JED, "compared to the previous year, 2005 showed a disturbing regression in press freedom in DRC." And the situation is hardly less worrying elsewhere in Central Africa. In Chad, in the months of July and August, four journalists were jailed in N'Djamena until the case against them for "procedural infringements" was quashed.

The full report is available on JED website: www.jed-afrique.org.

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1. DIARY

DRC: HAM, OMEC and UNPC meet for discussions

On 16 January the *High Authority for the Media* (HAM), the *Congolese media observatory* (OMEC) and the *Congolese Press National Union* (UNPC) will meet for discussions in Kinshasa.

This meeting follows a period of methodological support provided to OMEC and UNPC by Baudouin Hamuli and Donat M'Baya aimed at clarifying the mode of operation of the two organisations.

The meeting is being organised by the Institut Panos Paris with funding from the British department for international development (DFID).

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2. PRINT MEDIA NEWS

Gabon: *Le Miroir*, Gabon's first on-line daily

Le Miroir is Gabon's first on-line daily, and can be found at www.lemiroir.ga. The paper offers several columns, including politics, economy, current affairs, culture, analysis, and opinions.

The editorial line is broadly satirical, with a critical approach to current affairs.

A weekly 8-page print version offers a selection of key articles. With a print run of 5000 *Le Miroir* is printed by Multipress, distributed by Sogapresse and on sale at 300 Fcfa (0.45 euros).

AN / IPP

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3. LEGAL AND FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE MEDIA

Rwanda: Media on the road to greater responsibility

On 9 December, the High Council of the Press (HCP) published its report on media respect for press laws and codes of conduct. The report based its findings on data gathered throughout June for print media and during the third week of June for radio and television. The report, which was presented to a gathering of journalists, suggests that the profession had generally kept within its code of conduct during the analysis period, despite occasional lapses.

For example, 35.65% of reports broadcast on radio and television, and 19% of articles in print media did not provide a source for their information. A similar absence of credits was found for photographs, while mastheads naming contributors were lacking and advertising rates not given.

The report recommends training sessions for journalists, in order to raise awareness on the need to keep within media laws and codes of conduct.

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Rwanda: Radio specifications being drawn up

A workshop was held in Kigali from 28 to 29 November 2005, devoted to media regulation in Rwanda, the drafting of specifications for radio stations and to deal with complaints against the media.

The meeting, organised by the *High Council of the Press* (HCP), brought together 40 specialists including journalists and lawyers. The participants proposed a series of amendments to the various texts, previously drawn up by the HCP, with support from the president of the *Conseil Supérieur de la Communication* in Burkina Faso, Luc-Adolphe Tiao.

Participants called on the legislature to intervene to clarify a contradiction between article 14 of the radio specifications that forbids political parties from making use of a radio broadcasting enterprise, and article 20 of the law on political parties, which authorises it.

The workshop was proposed by Institut Panos Paris, with support from Swiss development aid, (DDC).

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4. STRUCTURING AND PROFESSIONALISATION OF THE MEDIA

DRC: UNPC defines its priorities

From 13 – 15 December, the *Congolese Press National Union* (UNPC) held a self-evaluation and programming meeting in Kinshasa, attended by members of the UNPC steering committee, presidents of its provincial chapters and representatives of the main media organisations in DRC.

An initial analysis of the way UNPC has been operating since the National Press Congress held in March 2004 revealed serious communication failures within the institution. Participants cited a number of obstacles, including the ambiguity of the union's statutes,

which derived from the National Congress, and put the UNPC in conflict with other media bodies. The provincial UNPC representatives shared this impression. They nevertheless noted a genuine dynamism in the press and all the provincial sections of the union had carried out restructuring following decisions made at National Congress. By the end of the meeting the participants had singled out a number of priority lines of action for the period 2006-2007. These include instituting a system of work contracts within the Congolese media, strengthening journalists' capacity to cover the elections, providing training in drafting and executing projects and the promotion of press centres in the provinces.

The workshop was held as part of methodological support provided by Baudouin Hamuli to UNPC with support from Institut Panos Paris, the British department for International development (DFID) and NIZA.

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DRC: AFEM/SK defends women's rights

On 11 December the *Women of the media Association in South-Kivu* (AFEM/SK) held a workshop in Bukavu on "*the major problems of involving women in the process of democratisation*".

Twenty women from radios clubs and listeners' clubs in the Kabare and Walungu districts took part in the workshop. Noting the considerable influence of traditions on the absence of women in public life, AFEM/SK decided to produce a programme to raise awareness of the role of women in the process of democratisation.

Entitled "Us, Women" the programme should provide a platform for women voters and potential candidates for the DRC elections to express their views. Women from rural areas will also be a solid source of information and should be able to act as relays to pass on messages to the more far-flung rural areas of South-Kivu province.

The broadcasts will be produced by *Radio Maendeleo* and others should follow, thanks to the NGO, Search for Common Ground. It will then be possible to distribute copies of the programmes to other provinces in DRC to be broadcast by new radio stations.

DM / IPP

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