

Convinced of the key role of public and private broadcasting, including digital and enhanced broadcasting in the years ahead, in bringing about an information society in which all citizens are included and can participate,

Stressing broadcasters' commitment and contribution to such fundamental values as freedom of expression, access to information, media pluralism and cultural diversity,

Believing that the information society should be founded on the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in particular Article 19, on the fundamental right to freedom of expression,

The World Broadcasting Unions (WBU), comprising regional Broadcasting Unions representing the leading radio and television organizations throughout the world, hereby put forward the following principles and objectives:

1. Communications technology is not an end in itself; it is a vehicle for the provision of information and content

By definition, the term «information society» refers to the importance of information and content for the public. Communication should also involve understanding, tolerance, respect and intercultural enrichment.

2. Freedom of expression, freedom and pluralism of the media and cultural diversity should be respected and promoted

Freedom of expression, pluralism and cultural diversity are fundamental values and objectives which should underpin the media system and the information society as a whole, not least in the context of globalization.

3. The electronic media have a vital role to play in the information society

The media have a vital role in producing, gathering and distributing quality content within the information society. Individual communication has its limits. Communication to the general public will continue to be essential for, inter alia, selecting and interpreting information and placing it in its proper context, and to serve as a platform for the exchange of information and ideas.

Independent broadcasting services at the national and regional levels play a major role in providing unbiased information, safeguarding media pluralism and contributing to cultural diversity, particularly through the promotion of local/regional culture and audiovisual production, making full use of the various technical means offered by the information society.

In many parts of the world, independent public service broadcasting has a special responsibility in this regard. Distanced from political and economic pressures, it has the role of ensuring access to information, knowledge, culture and entertainment for all citizens, including vulnerable and minority groups and of being a driving force for the creation of domestic content.

Commercial broadcasting, whether funded by advertising or subscription, contributes to the delivery of key policy goals such as the production of original and varied content and the existence of a plurality of news sources. In addition, other forms of legally established and non-profit media, operated for local communities, can play an important part by serving women, youth, indigenous people, children and minority groups.

4. Television and radio are crucial for ensuring social cohesion and development in the digital world

The future is not only «on-line». Providing both information and entertainment to all, radio and television are closely linked to the daily life of everyone, and they will retain their unique level of presence, existing, in many countries, in virtually every home. They have huge digital potential for, for instance, the distribution of multimedia content.

Especially for the developing countries, traditional radio and television will continue to be the most effective way of delivering high-quality information on, for example, health-care and education, of combating illiteracy, of debating issues of general interest and of promoting a culture of peace. These media need to be strengthened to be able to reach out to everybody. Moreover, poor, remote communities cannot be made part of the «wired» generation without a significant improvement in their living conditions.

5. Information should remain accessible and affordable to every one

Access to information is a fundamental human right. The reception of broadcast services therefore needs to remain accessible and affordable for citizens, and broadcasters must have access to events of interest to the public. The new opportunities offered by the information age should also be at the service of the whole range of communities. Free-to-air broadcasting, and especially broadcasting with universal coverage, are important means of achieving this objective. If new electronic media are to achieve the same objective, open and interoperable platforms are essential.