

# African Union must hold members accountable for media repression

In a meeting between the African Union and editors from across the continent, the African Union was called on to hold member states accountable and for the end to the "harassment, imprisonment and killing of media workers and journalists".



Image by 123RF

Pan African editors and press officers of the continent were hosted by the South African Government, at the invitation of the African Union Commission (AUC) and The African Editors Forum (TAEF), to consider the 'Popularisation of Agenda 2063 through The African Editors' Forum', under the theme of "Deepening Africa's Narrative and Capacities to Deliver Agenda 2063".

They also reportedly took the opportunity to reflect on the progress recorded in relation to the implementation of the outcomes of our first meeting in Kigali, on the margins of the 27<sup>th</sup> AU Heads of State Summit from 14 to 15 July 2016.

The preamble from the Africa editors read as follows:

"Noting the progress in relation to the political commitment and the implementation of Agenda 2063, we call upon the AUC to consider mechanisms to strengthen the administrative and communications capacities so as to ensure a more effective communications and interaction with the media, civil society and the citizens.

“To pursue this we agree to set a joint AUC and TAEF steering committee which shall also explore the longer term relationship between the institutions.

## **Pan African media**

“Considering our commitment to Pan Africanism as well as the objectives and aspirations of Agenda 2063, we pledge our energies and minds towards the establishment of the mooted African broadcaster, a Pan African website and news agency.

“Reaffirming our commitment to Africa’s narrative and excellence we commit to celebrate the Windhoek Declaration (which we consider as Africa’s gift to the world) through the recognition of African Writers who have reported on Agenda 2063 and related initiatives.

“Appreciating the implementation of the 10 year plan of Agenda 2063, we also took the time to pay focussed attention to the Aspirations of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, with a view of positively impacting on their implementation. In reflecting on the Aspirations we paid attention to:

1. Women and the Media;
2. Aspirations 1 and 2;
3. Aspiration 5, and;
4. Broad media and public participation.

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***We further call on the TAEF and AUC as well as interested private Pan Africanists to consider supporting a Pan African Media Award with a focus on women’s empowerment***

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In relation to women and the media, the editor’s agreed to collaborate on a programme with the African Union Commission and public broadcasters to promote the involvement of women in the newsroom and as media owners. To advance this the editors agreed to hold member states accountable for equality and equity in the work place.

“We further call on the TAEF and AUC as well as interested private Pan Africanists to consider supporting a Pan African Media Award with a focus on women’s empowerment and young women.

In relation to the broad media and public participation, we request the speedy implementation of the Africa Passport as a means of promoting free movement of people and goods as well as news.

## **Free speech**

“We further noted, that there are repressive legal regimes in some member states, and call upon the African Union to hold member states accountable in the implementation of all decisions and instruments directed at promoting free speech and the media.

“We call upon the end of the harassment, imprisonment and killing of media workers and journalists.”

In relation to a prosperous and integrated Africa, the editors noted the broad political commitment towards the implementation of Agenda 2063 as shown by the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Solemn Declaration and the Domestication processes, and committed to promote the domestication of the Agenda in all member states.

## **‘Buy Africa’ campaign**

They further committed to collaborate with the AUC in order to develop a survey and score card to measure progress and the extent of the penetration of the Agenda 2063 messages, in population.

In relation to a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics, the editors further agreed to promote a “buy Africa campaign” which would unlock the potential of the creative sector.

“We also agreed to collaborate with the AUC on the implementation of the Great Africa Museum, the Africa Music Awards, and the African Encyclopedia, amongst others.

“We further commit to actively support our creative industries as well as the reformation of the education sector so that it integrates our culture in the education curriculum.

Recognising the institutional limitations of the TAEF, we further commit to strengthening our own capacities by (amongst others) establishing regional offices in the five regions of the Union and hosting regional meetings and consultations.

“We hereby request the cooperation of the African Union Heads of State and Government, the African Union Commission, other continental agencies and member states. To ensure that the objectives of this declaration are met by 2018, and shall convene annually to take stock of progress,” the preamble ended.

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