



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

**SPEECH BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY, STATE DEPARTMENT FOR
BROADCASTING AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS, MRS FATUMA HIRSI
MOHAMED, CBS, DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE SIDA
SPONSORED INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM (ITP) PROJECT AT THE
PRIDE INN, WESTLANDS ON 12TH FEBRUARY, 2019**

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen;

I take this opportunity to thank the sponsor of the International Training Programme, the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), which aims at supporting responsible and accountable media through self-regulation.

I also thank the implementing partners namely NIRAS, Fojo Media Institute of Sweden, International Media Support (IMS) of Denmark and wish to mention that this programme is timely for Africa. It's a time in Africa where media is becoming more and more central in democracy, leadership and governance agenda.

You will agree with me that media wields immense power and influence that cannot be taken for granted. In exercise of this power, there are and should be safeguards within which it acts and operates. It is the duty of the media to exercise responsible journalism in the process of disseminating information to the public.

The media is a corporate citizen, with duties and obligations similar to those of an ordinary citizen and perhaps much more. Salient among these, is to represent issues and facts in a manner that creates positive perception about the state of affairs of our countries. Media should not be used as a tool to encourage divisive issues such as tribalism that polarizes our societies.

Instead, it should be used to celebrate our rich and vibrant cultural diversity and encourage harmonious coexistence and cohesion.

It is important for the media to give hope and confidence to businesses and ordinary citizens working hard to make a difference in our societies. This is not to say that the media should turn a blind eye on bad governance. Speaking truth to power and holding those in authority accountable is a divine calling of the fourth estate.

Our citizens expect the media to help them promote transparency and good governance to spur development in our respective countries.

Governments, on the other hand, should not be blind to the challenges facing the media, including poor welfare, unfriendly working environment, and safety concerns. These issues need attention. Similarly, incidences of corruption in media must be addressed to promote trust. We need to find ways where the Media and other players join hands to fight this vice.

It is only a professional, accountable and public interest driven media that is able to play this role. Self-regulation provides an opportunity for media to set its own professional standards and ensure compliance with the standards without government interference.

Ladies and gentlemen

The media has the ability to be accountable to itself and to the citizens. The Kenya media regulation model has demonstrated that the media can be professional and accountable to the public. The commendable performance by the Media Council of Kenya, in regulating the media by creating a mechanism where people who feel misrepresented and

offended by the media can lodge their complaints to reclaim their reputation, is a testament of the success of media self-regulation in the country. Kenyan media has won the hearts of the Kenya society and ranks top among the institutions most trusted by Kenyans.

I understand that this programme has brought together top media players and regulators from Kenya, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia and will benefit close to 75 people from these countries in a period of three years. This, in my view, is a critical mass in triggering conversations around the subject of self-regulation and the role of the media in social, political and economic transformation.

It is important that we manage the negative perception among the media and civil societies that the media is only independent where there is confrontation with the government.

The close working relationship between the media and the government has not in any way created self-censorship or killed the focus of holding the government of the day to account. There is always a confluence between the government intention for its citizen and the media focus on public interest matters. Media and Government should strengthen this confluence but at the same time maintain its independence. Media that works in synergy with the government is always a strong media.

Ladies and gentlemen

As I conclude, I know that some of you have specific and unique problems in your respective countries concerning media freedom. In some instances, freedom of expression is highly constrained; journalists are working in difficult circumstances while social media has posed a threat to national security. While laws have been enacted to deal with these challenges, it is the commitment to be professional and engaging your government that will help manage these challenges.

Additionally, I urge you to take the lead in protecting and preserving our African cultural heritage and identity by telling our African success stories and great values. As media, you play a big role in ensuring that information on our rich and diverse cultures is preserved for the benefit of the future generations.

With those remarks, I wish to welcome you to Kenya and wish you a fruitful stay. Sample Kenyan food, Kenyan culture and take time out to visit our Nairobi park, a few kilometers from the city centre.

Karibuni and thank you.