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Statement Of Recommendations

AMIC SEMINAR ON "MEDIA MONITORS IN ASIA"
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand
29 June - 1 July 1994

STATEMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

PREAMBLE

It is generally agreed that we live in a changing world. We are constantly responding to the challenges of an evolving social environment and updating our concepts of ethical behaviour and standards. While it is difficult to develop a universal yardstick, there are time-tested and time-honoured standards that must prevail. The work of researchers will put meaning into the work of media monitors as they strive to promote ethical standards today's and in the future.

*Part I: The Role of Media Monitoring Mechanisms
in Promoting Ethical Standards*

1. We recognise the need for a multiplicity of media monitoring mechanisms at three levels, namely: (1) statutory/official bodies; (2) trade organisations; and (3) public interest groups. We recommend that media monitoring mechanisms should be democratic, representative and autonomous.

2. We recognise that one of the functions of the media is to promote a competitive environment and thus prevent monopolistic tendencies by government or private enterprises. Wherever there is a possibility of conflict between media ownership and commercial interests, appropriate mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that media freedom does not suffer.

3. Media monitoring mechanisms should be continually updated and strengthened in terms of training, research, and resource inputs with the view of upholding and promoting ethical standards.

4. Regional organisations should be encouraged to carry out comparative research on media ethics in the various countries of Asia. The output of such research should be widely publicised.

5. International linkages and information exchanges should be pursued among media monitoring bodies wherever possible. These activities should provide a basis for agreement on regionally acceptable ethical standards and for updating and strengthening capabilities for media monitoring.

6. Transnational producers in the media should be

encouraged to follow regionally acceptable standards of ethics on issues such as violence, horror, and sex.

7. AMIC and other appropriate regional organisations should compile and circulate a recommended framework drawn from codes of ethics from various countries and invite communication practitioners to define the framework in operational and actionable terms within their national contexts.

8. A follow-up seminar/workshop should be organised on the practical aspects of media monitoring and to delineate the roles of media monitoring mechanisms by the government, trade organisations, and public interest groups.

Part II: Strengthening Media Monitoring Agencies

9. We believe that existing monitoring mechanisms in most Asian countries are inadequate, falling short of the need to protect the media from inroads into their freedom and to provide corrective mechanisms for the citizens against media excesses.

10. We recognise that no single model is universally applicable to all countries in the region. Even so, we believe that there are certain essential features that all effective media monitoring mechanisms should have, regardless of the cultural and other conditions existing in each country. These features include:

- independence;
- accessibility;
- transparency;
- fairness;
- simplicity of procedures;
- integrity and competence of members.

11. Looking to the experience of the various countries in the region, we are of the view that:

(a) No single body can effectively monitor the media in a given country and it is desirable that there be a plurality of institutions performing this function.

(b) Such institutions should be as representative as possible. In addition to media practitioners, they should include relevant non-governmental representatives, academics and members of other professional bodies drawn as far as possible from all sectors of society.

(c) Members should be chosen for their proven competence and integrity. The selection process should be as transparent as possible.

(d) The mandates of these bodies should be wide enough

to accommodate reasonable concerns relevant to all the media. They should include effective remedies for the redressal of complaints concerning breach of professional and ethical standards, unfair practices and cases of factual inaccuracies and bias in reporting and presentation.

(e) The redressal procedures of the mechanisms should be as simple and as accessible as possible.

(f) The mechanisms should be insulated from pressures of all kinds, including those from funding sources.

(g) These bodies should assist the media in performing their functions without fear or favour.