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Facilitating Asian Media in Promoting a Culture of Peace

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Twenty professionals comprising communication researchers, media practitioners, religion representatives belonging to Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Buddhism, met in Manila for three days, 4 – 6 December 2000 at a Symposium on Facilitating Asian Media in Promoting a Culture of Peace. The countries represented in the meeting were: India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore and Sri Lanka. The Symposium was the culmination of a project organized by the Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore with collaboration from the Global Society for Peace and Development, Manila. It was supported by the Japan Foundation Asia Centre and the Regional Communication Office for Asia, UNESCO, Kuala Lumpur.

The Symposium programme covered two welcome addresses, seven country reports, commentaries by seven media representatives from the countries involved, presentations by representatives from the four religions, and a preliminary report of a tracer study on media and a culture of peace.

After the presentations, participants were divided into two groups to respond to the following questions posed for discussion:

1. What are the practical problems faced in promoting peace by religious groups?

2. How can media be harnessed to promote a culture of peace?

3. How to creatively enhance inter-faith understanding to promote a culture of peace?

4. What should be the role of media in conflict resolutions?

Recommendations

Participants pointed out the importance of recognizing the uniqueness of the Asian religions and political relationships when planning strategies for action. Based on the two
reports presented, participants unanimously agreed that the media has a positive role to play in educating and creating a climate for a culture of peace. The following recommendations were adopted at the Symposium:

1. Ways and means must be determined to publish a manual on reporting issues relating to peace and conflict and have it translated in the different languages for journalists of national and regional language media.

2. Journalists should widen reporting of peace and ethnic issues to encompass regional and international conflicts that are evident in Asian countries.

3. A directory of institutions working towards peace or promoting a culture of peace should be published by AMIC and distributed among media persons to improve their participation in consultative dialogues, and therefore improve their reporting on peace issues.

4. AMIC and other similar regional media organizations must help to create a realistic exposure to media persons for better understanding of the role of media in promoting a culture of peace.

5. An Asian Peace Network (“PeaceNet Asia”) must be established.

**Agenda For Action**

Participants recommended that an agenda for action should be initiated at individual, national and regional levels. Such agenda should include further meetings, training, and research.

In achieving all these tasks and to ensure momentum, participants unanimously agreed to network among themselves and to initiate in their respective countries appropriate agendas for action. They also suggested that AMIC take the lead in initiating and coordinating these efforts at regional level.

Proceedings of the Symposium are being edited and will be available in the second quarter of 2001.