

African journalists make groundbreaking cooperation agreement

The Federation of African Journalists (FAJ), the regional organisation of the International Federation of Journalists, was hosted last Friday, 22 January 2010, for the first time by leaders of the Commission of the African Union (AU) at its headquarters in Addis Ababa on the eve of the meeting of African leaders.



FAJ officials met AU Deputy Chairperson Erastus J.O. Mwencha to discuss the state of press freedom in the continent, the safety of journalists, legislation on freedom of information as well as the setting up of a continental-wide observatory for the media.

“As African governments are coming closer to developing policies to be enacted throughout the continent is now crucial that the AU starts playing a leading role in promoting freedom of the media so that African citizens can have access to independent and impartial information” said FAJ President Omar Faruk Osma

In the face of increased dangers encountered by African journalists caught in war and conflicts, and threatened by criminal gangs, the federation has been running a strong campaign to ensure that journalists work in safe and secure conditions. “Journalists cannot fulfil their mission if messengers continue to be silenced by bullets,” added Osman. A formal request was made by the federation's leaders for the AU to adopt a resolution protecting journalists working in war zones similar to resolution 1738 agreed by the United Nations Security Council in December 2008.

FAJ leaders also stressed the need for cooperation based on the setting up of a formal relationship with the AU. “Both the AU and FAJ have a responsibility to promote structures for dialogue between governments and journalists for the benefit of African communities and create a culture of shared respects,” added Osman.

In addressing the pressing need to strengthen citizens' voices in Africa, both sides agreed on the importance of new communications and new technologies to build peace, reconciliation and democratic development across the continent.

In recognising the federation as the representative body of journalists in the continent, Mwencha responded to the call for further cooperation by promising to address proposals being made by the federation to enhance journalism through programmes and activities to promote reliable, and high quality information and to strengthen ethical journalism; encourage media accountability based on principles of self-regulation; improve journalists' social conditions, and encourage media literacy and education programmes to ensure that all citizens can play their part in building a reliable and trustworthy information landscape. He further stressed the AU's commitment to stand with African journalists and promote an environment in which independent media can perform without hindrance and journalists can work in safer conditions.

Article published courtesy of [IFJ.org](https://www.ifj.org)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>