

## FAJ congress concludes in Zim

The second continental congress of the Federation of African Journalists (FAJ), the African regional organisation of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), concluded Sunday, 28 March 2010 in Harare, Zimbabwe, on a call for a stronger and more united journalist movement Africa.



The congress, convened from 27 - 28 March, was attended by leaders of African journalists and senior trade unionists, and is the first and the largest summit of journalists organised in the country since the political and economic crisis which severely affected human and trade union rights, including freedom of expression, press freedom and freedom of association.

The delegates of the congress adopted a three-year programme of priority activities covering decent work and safe and secure working environments for journalists as well as promoting ethical journalism and media accountability. The congress was a major opportunity to further strengthen the traditional democratic culture among African journalists' unions and associations.

“Our African affiliates consolidated their efforts to maintain unity and promote and defend decent work and better working conditions for African journalists,” said Jim Boumelha, president of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) who attended the two-day congress. “The congress was a true manifestation of the commitment of African journalists unions to build strong and effective unions for working journalists, address safety issues and improve professional standards.”

At the opening ceremony inaugurated by Minister of Finance Tendai Biti, representing Zimbabwe Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, key speakers including UNESCO deputy assistant director general Mogens Schmidt, secretary general of the Zimbabwe Trade Unions Congress (ZCTU), Wellington Chibebe and Pansy Tlakula, special rapporteur of freedom of expression of the African Commission of Human and Peoples Rights, addressed the acute challenges faced by journalists throughout the continent.

The IFJ president hailed the achievements of the federation since its first working congress of November 2008 in Nairobi, Kenya, in particular its efforts to improve the working conditions of African journalists and defend press freedom.

A seven-strong Steering Committee was elected for a mandate of three years, which comprised members from Nigeria, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tunisia, Somalia, Gambia and Zimbabwe. Omar Faruk Osman from Somalia was re-elected as the president of FAJ as were Foster Dongozi from Zimbabwe and Ndey Tapha Sessoh of the Gambia, respectively as vice-president and treasurer.

Hailing the successful achievements of the congress, the re-elected FAJ president recalled the long journey taken by journalists' unions and associations in Africa to become the authoritative voice for journalists in the continent, speaking out for their professional and social rights and in defence of press freedom.

“The success of this continental congress is proof of the new spirit of our African affiliates and their determination to consolidate in a very short time their solidarity, democratic tradition and struggle for freedom and justice,” said Omar Faruk.

“Social injustice, dreadful working conditions, unscrupulous media companies and repression of freedom the press are major hurdles journalists in Africa have to confront day in day out. We applaud our unions for such a successful congress where fundamental decisions were taken to strengthen their struggles on behalf of journalists in the continent,” he added.

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