University for Peace

World Press Freedom Day

NYC 4 May 2023

The United Nations' World Press Freedom Day, established in 1993 to be marked annually May 3rd, represents the United Nations' commitment to freedom of expression around the world. According to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, free press and freedom of expression, in the media and throughout civil society, is a fundamental driver of human rights and peace. Moreover, the concerning levels of polarization, media censorship, surveillance, and inadequate data governance, stand as barriers between the achievement of not only human rights but sustainable development more broadly. The World Press Freedom Day 2023, on its 30th anniversary, "Shaping a Future of Rights: *Freedom of expression as a driver for all other human rights",* organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), will involve crucial cross-sectoral and multilateral exploration of the ongoing work to improve global achievement of freedom of expression.

As part of its mandate to promote "among all human beings the spirit of understanding, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence, to stimulate cooperation among peoples and to help lessen obstacles and threats to world peace and progress", The University for Peace, created in 1980 by the UN General Assembly Resolution 35/55, will host two complementary side events as an official part of the UN World Press Freedom Day (WPFD), providing the critical link in this discussion between human rights and the achievement of peace.

The University for Peace, as a Permanent Observer of the UN General Assembly and an institution of higher education with a global presence, holds a unique position in the international community to facilitate cross-sectoral collaboration where meaningful partnerships between the private and public sectors can lead to the kind of cooperation and merging of agendas that are required to bring the innovation needed to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In light of the new challenges and opportunities presented by the ever-changing digital world today, UPEACE has a Master program on Media and Peacebuilding, as well as extensive research on the issue of freedom of expression and the protection of journalists. We have developed training for Central American journalists, as well as students and university professors, which discusses the identification of hate speech, countering digital and physical attacks. Similarly, with the support of

UNESCO, we have researched the issue of the safety of journalists, and since 2022, we host the first regional unit providing legal support to Costa Rican Journalists.

Presented in 2021 to the Fourth Committee of the UN General Assembly by the Secretary-General António Guterres, the University for Peace's Tri-Annual Report outlines its establishment of the Global Center of Peace Innovation, as part of a broader initiative to research and explore bold and innovative solutions for peace. Under this commitment to peace innovation, the University for Peace is building unique partnerships across sectors and professional expertise to explore how new technologies - as a place of interdependence across sectors – can be leveraged to build better solutions for the future.

These initiatives, also seek to join efforts developed by the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology, particularly for the Global Digital Compact (to be presented at the UN Summit of the Future, and co-facilitated by the Permanent Missions of Rwanda and Sweden to the UN). This Global Digital Compact is expected to "outline shared principles for an open, free and secure digital future for all". Central to establishing such principles is the generation of innovative solutions that effectively and sustainably bridge the gap between the work that the private and public sectors are doing in silos, but that inevitably implicate each other

Given that the current obstacles to freedom of expression manifest themselves through digital technology, solutions will require new expertise to map conflicts, design and execute new sustainable interventions. The devastating impact of ineffective coordination can be easily seen today from security breaches that expose journalists, environmental activists and others, the disposing of hazardous digital waste, to violent threats to regional stability resulting from increased polarization.

The side event, "Data collection and distribution processes as enablers for the exercise of human rights", explores questions of how data travels, the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), the rule of law and data governance to understand how cross-sectoral solutions can serve to foster a free press and access to information. Internet-based platforms changed the dynamics for the production and distribution of content, and nowadays, anyone with access to ICT can intervene in this cycle. Nevertheless, offline events continue to influence what we see in media, and particularly, how we exercise other human rights. In this panel, by using post-covid case studies, we will discuss the implications of open data collection systems for the protection of the right to privacy, the distribution of information through non-traditional media to organize collective actions and exercise the right to association, and finally, we will consider how algorithms filter information

not only impacting the exercise of our right to freedom of expression but also to education.

Frank La Rue, UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, in 2012 indicated that

> …journalists are individuals who observe and describe events, document and analyse events, statements, policies, and any propositions that can affect society, with the purpose of systematizing such information and gathering of facts and analyses to inform sectors of society or society as a whole. Such a definition of journalists includes all media workers and support staff, as well as community media workers and so-called "citizen journalists" when they momentarily play that role. (A/HRC/20/17, para. 4)

The hopeful outcome is an outline of the challenges & establishment of frameworks needed to protect freedom of expression, as well as consideration of the rights & regulations involved in so doing.

See next page for event details:

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Official Side Event

NYC 4 May 2023

Data collection and distribution processes as enablers for the exercise of human rights

Organizer: University for Peace
Format: In person (Livestream on UN Web TV)
Venue: United Nations Headquarters, Conference Room 8
Date: May 4th, 2023, 04:00 – 06:00 PM (EST)
Co-Sponsorship: Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the United Nations

Agenda (1 hr 45 min):

Introduction: Vice Rector Juan Carlos Sainz-Borgo, *University for Peace*

Opening Remarks: Ambassador Maritza Chan, *Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations*

Keynote (10 min): Ms. Maria Westergren, Political Affairs Officer *representing Under-Secretary-General Alice Wairimu Nderitu at the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide*

Panel Discussion (45 minutes):

- Deputy Permanent Observer Ramu Damodaran, *University for Peace* (Moderator)
- Ms. Jayashri Wyatt, *Chief of the Education Outreach Section, Outreach Division, Department of Global Communications, United Nations*
- Dr. Chris Wiggins, *Chief Data Scientist, NY Times and Professor at The Data Science Institute, Columbia University*
- Dr Mona Sloane, *Senior Research Scientist & Research Professor, NYU Center for Responsible AI*
- Mr. Aziz Ahmad, *Co-Founder and Chairman, CodersTrust and CEO, UTC Associates, Inc.*
- Amy Larsen, *Director of Strategy and Business Management, Democracy Forward Initiative, Microsoft*

Q&A (15 minutes)

Closing Remarks (5 min):

- Dr Mariateresa Garrido, *University for Peace*