

Paris, 20 July 2018

Political control of the media, subjugation of news and information to private interests, the growing influence of corporate actors who escape democratic control, online mass disinformation and the undermining of quality journalism – such are the dangers that threaten journalistic freedom, in addition to the direct threats to journalists themselves. Some of these dangers are unfortunately already familiar but other, newer, ones force us to devise new democratic guarantees – because democracy’s survival is at stake, because democracy cannot survive without an informed, open and dynamic public debate.

The crisis of trust in democracies and the growing influence of despotic regimes pose a major threat to freedoms, civil harmony and peace. For the well-being of humanity, the public debate must be based on “factual truths” that are freely expressed and interpreted. The demands of rigour, independence and pluralism are more necessary than ever if we are to effectively address global and local challenges that include armed conflicts, terrorism, polarization, corruption, discrimination, violations of civil, political, economic and social rights, climate change, declining biodiversity and organized crime.

The public arena’s traditional equilibriums are being disrupted by the dazzling speed and destructiveness of these changes. It is in order to jointly devise appropriate responses that Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has decided to create an “Information and Democracy Commission” with the task of drafting an “International Declaration” capable of serving as the basis of an international commitment by a wide range of stakeholders in the form of an “International Covenant on Information and Democracy.”

The Declaration’s function will be to state principles, define objectives for decision-makers and propose forms of governance. It must set out human rights, especially those relating to freedom of expression, the principles of journalistic ethics, and an ethical code for the development and use of technologies, and provide guidelines for both public and private-sector decision-makers.

The Declaration must constitute a point of reference that will mobilize all those who are committed to defending a free and pluralistic public arena, which is essential for democracy.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Shirin Ebadi' and the signature on the right is 'Cs' followed by a horizontal line. The signatures are positioned above a vertical line that separates them.

Shirin Ebadi and Christophe Deloire  
Joint presidents of the Commission