



## **Joint Statement on the Freedom of the Press Day**

On May 4,

At the 7<sup>th</sup> European Commission – African Union Commission meeting on 22 April 2015 in Brussels, the two Commissions reaffirmed their joint commitment to a strong African human rights system that is accessible to African citizens. On May 3, the 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of World Press Freedom day we reiterate that free flow of information and ideas and diverse media constitute one of the cornerstones of a democratic society, rule of law, peace and sustainable inclusive development.

We are jointly committed to promoting and protecting freedom of opinion and expression worldwide and condemn the increasing level of intimidation and violence that journalists, media actors and other individuals face in many countries across the world. The right to freedom of expression includes freedom to seek and receive information, which is a key component of democratic governance. We promote the active use of the African Model Law on Access to Information adopted in 2013.

The Internet and digital technologies have expanded the possibilities of individuals and media to exercise the right to freedom of expression and freely access information. We reiterate that human rights that exist offline must also be protected online, in particular the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

We commend the work of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information, who has a large mandate to monitor and analyse compliance with African human rights instruments. We note the first judgment on free speech of the African Court on Human and Peoples Rights made in December 2014 in the Issa Konaté case that imprisonment for defamation violates the right to freedom of expression.

The EU and AU held a joint panel on 4 May 2014 in collaboration with the Foreign Correspondent Association based in Addis Ababa "*Let Journalism Thrive! Towards Better Reporting, Gender Equality, and Safety in the Digital Age*".

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