



Concept Note

Media are supposed to contribute to peace, security and democratic development, to increase and diffuse knowledge, to enhance mutual understanding and to further universal respect for justice, for human rights and for fundamental freedoms.

News media organizations function to provide quality information and a wide range of perspectives and choices. They promote informed citizenship by supporting public participation in democratic discourse. Media, particularly, take on an especially meaningful task in democracy, in which they have special rights, but also special duties. The most important duty is to report the news fully and correctly.

Ownership and control of media systems, however, are converging in dominant groups. This trend restricts the necessary and desirable plurality of opportunities to citizens. Media content is generally, driven by market and commercial pressures, inadequately considering ethics of the public interest. The result is lack of public participation and digression of public attention from societal challenges. Also, absence of self-critical scrutiny and citizens' feedback deprive media with a corrective and reformatory mechanism

For suitable choices and decisions, citizens must be able to trust the information. Breakdown in the trust between the people and journalism means weakening of democracy. Without democracy there are no free media and there can be no real freedom of expression.

More and more people, however, are concluding that dominant, agenda-setting, mainstream (elitist) media are key obstacles to progressive social change and a democratic state and society.

Media have, in many ways, become a part of the power structure and are positioned to exploit their enormous influence to advance both their own agenda and those of their allies in the state and business sectors, as also non-state actors. Most people (workers, peasants, the middle classes, artists, students etc.) have minimal say in public affairs. Also, there seem to be few meeting points between media and people's movements.

While technological advancements have created new possibilities for the free flow of information, social networking and global activism, there is also the potential for corporations and governments to increase their control over media, restrict the flow of information, and appropriate these new tools for profit and control at the expense of free expression and democracy.

Citizens cannot afford to avoid their democratic duties towards ensuring the rights as well as responsibilities of media. Citizens' active role in critically monitoring/analyzing media content and programs is a recognized function in a democratic dispensation. Ensuring the public service function of media is accepted as a viable and desirable democratic instrument.

Society for Alternative Media and Research (SAMAR) and Citizens' Initiative on Media Issues (CIMI) in cooperation with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Pakistan are engaged in strengthening democratic media development through raising citizens' voices; one of the earlier efforts in that regard has been in the form of preparing and producing the printed version of the "Recommendations of the Media Commission appointed by the Supreme Court of Pakistan 2013". This consultation meeting will also look briefly at the status of implementation of the Recommendations and overdue actions for implementation of the Commission's Recommendations.