

## **FOCUS SESSION 25:**

### **Title of the Session:**

#### **MEDIA, ACCOUNTABILITY & THE POST 2015 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

8.00, April 16, 2015, Montejo 4

### **Speakers/Panelists:**

- Jaime Abello Banfi, Director General, Gabriel Garcia Marquez Foundation, Colombia and member of the steering committee of the Global Forum for Media Development
- Dr. Roberto Tapia-Conyer, Director General, Carlos Slim Foundation and former Deputy Minister of Health, Mexico
- Erik Solheim, Chair, OECD Development Assistance Committee, Norway
- Nancy Lindborg, Assistant Administrator for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, USAID, USA
- David Hallam, Lead on post 2015 Development Framework, DFID, UK
- Joseph Warungu, Africa Media Initiative and BBC Sema Kenya Presenter [Chair]

### **Conclusions and key messages:**

The panel was organised by BBC Media Action, the BBC's international development charity, in cooperation with the Global Forum for Media Development, the OECD DAC, USAID, the EU, the US National Endowment for Democracy and Deutsche Welle and with the financial support of the UK Department for International Development.

The focus of the session was on whether and to what extent access to independent media should be a priority in the post 2015 agenda. It was designed to address the following questions: What is the role of media in the 21st Century in improving government responsiveness and holding government to account? Should "access to independent media" be incorporated into the post 2015 development framework? Why or why not? How can support for independent, trustworthy media improve its capacity constructively to hold government to account? How can support be better integrated into development cooperation strategies and what should such support focus on achieving? What are the linkages – and differentiations – between support to media and other accountability and transparency initiatives, including those focused on access to information, open government and civil society? Few development agencies prioritise support for media and fewer still have specialist staff focused on this area - How can demand for support to media be more appropriately and effectively prioritised in the aid architecture?

Erik Solheim argued that the importance of media to development was not in question. "Media is extremely important, that you need media to put leaders to account, to discover corruption and so on. This is obvious". But, he also argued that development strategies needed to understand the harm, as well as the good, that media do. "If you look around the world today, while there is a huge number of decent good media, there is also a good amount of media that makes it more

difficult for us to live together - more difficult for Christians to live with Muslims, more difficult for Muslims to live with Hindus, more difficult for Hindus to live with Sikhs [and we see this in many places]. We need to take this issue to heart.”

Nancy Lindborg, [USAID's Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance \(DCHA\)](#), made a strong connection between why USAID was supporting independent community media in Sudan to efforts to prevent ethnic conflict. “We have often very quickly invested in supporting the revitalization of community radio ...as people I met a couple of weeks ago in South Sudan said, people don't want to get engaged in ethnic war. They are hostage to the messages they are receiving right now.” She insisted that “USAID takes an approach that sees democracy, rights and governance as central to the development agenda. And that included media, media is the bloodstream that moves information around and enables citizens to be active and informed participants. It's both programmatically integrated as well as focused on [building media] capacity - it is absolutely central to our approach.”

David Hallam, the lead for the UK [Department for International Development](#) for the post 2015 process stressed why the UK believed that freedom of the media was such an important part of any future development strategy. “The reason we think this is so important is that it goes back to a fundamental belief that the social contract between the citizen and the state is central to state stability, and state stability is central to development. The way to build the social contract between the citizen and the state has to involve a free and independent media that can enable that contract to be built up.”

Nor was this an issue confined to the West. The vast majority of signatories to the Global Forum for Media Development's (GFMD) [petition](#) on this issue came from organisations in developing countries. Jaime Abello Banfi, a GFMD steering committee member, reinforced this arguing that media freedom, as well as the ethical conduct of the media were key concerns in Latin America.

Dr Roberto Tapia Conyer, Director General of the [Carlos Slim Foundation](#) drawing on his own personal (rather than organisational) experience in Mexico echoed this, arguing that “media at some point has to be looked at the ethical position have, that they have to be trained, that they have to see the role that they have in promoting a positive environment.”

Ultimately, there was a consensus in this panel that the role of media was of increasing importance if future development goals were to be met. “There can be no doubt about the centrality of media in the development debate”, said Erik Solheim of the OECD DAC. “We would be very happy to provide a space for that debate, to invite as many stakeholders as possible, certainly donor agencies and our members but also media from nations where there are difficulties.”

The final word went to David Hallam of the UK's Department for International Development (which provides support for BBC Media Action's work), who argued that if media were to be reflected in the post-2015 development framework, it would need a stronger advocacy effort. “There's quite a strong movement for a goal in the post-2015 development framework on good governance and effective institutions, and within that for a target on free media”, he argued, reflecting that British Prime Minister, David Cameron had co-chaired the UN High Level panel report. “We all have a role to play: for those of you in governments, what are you doing to make sure that your representatives in NY are arguing strongly for this goal and target? And for those of you who aren't in governments, what are you doing to ask your government whether they are supporting this goal in NY? So there is a real opportunity here if we can secure this as part of the next development agenda, then we can start to make sure that development agencies, governments, international organisations, are really focusing on support for a free media internationally.”