



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release – 27 May 2008

Strengthening Freedom of Expression in Nepal

Trainers from civil society organisations and public bodies in Nepal participated in a training of trainers workshop last week on freedom of expression hosted by ARTICLE 19, the Federation of Nepalese Journalists and Freedom Forum in Kathmandu. The third and final meeting of the Agenda for Change, in which high level representatives of different sectors of society gathered to formulate policy recommendations for strengthening freedom of expression in the country was also held last week.

“Protection of freedom of expression should become a priority for the new Constituent Assembly in Nepal. We are convinced that the training workshops and the recommendations furnished by the media professionals will help make this possible,” said Toby Mendel, Senior Director of Law, ARTICLE 19.

The training workshop, held on 21-22 May, brought together 22 experienced trainers from civil society organisations, the National Human Rights Commission, the police and the judicial training centre. The training covered a range of issues regarding international guarantees of freedom of expression, such as the legitimate scope of restrictions on freedom of expression, defamation standards, the right to information, and media regulation. The trainers have made a commitment to integrate freedom of expression into training agendas for public officers and journalists.

The third stakeholders’ meeting of the Agenda for Change process took place on 24-25 May in Nagarkot, Nepal. Twenty participants from journalists’ organisations, civil society groups, the legal community and the legislature discussed the situation of freedom of expression in Nepal and in particular Internet regulation, film censorship, advertisements in the media, taxation of the media, and media concentration. The participants finalised their recommendations for the Agenda for Change, a detailed policy document setting out how freedom of expression should be protected in Nepal.

The recommendations furnished by the third meeting included, among others, the following key proposals:

- The government should adopt a national strategy to promote greater access to the Internet
- Films should not be subject to prior censorship and the Censor Board should be abolished
- Advertising in the media should be regulated by an independent body
- Measures should be put in place to ensure transparency of media ownership

NOTES TO EDITORS:

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- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.
- Federation of Nepali Journalists is an umbrella organisation of over 7000 journalists from Nepal.
- Freedom Forum is a non-profit, non-governmental, academic organisation which promotes and protects the right to information, media freedom, freedom of expression, democracy and human rights in Nepal.