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RAPPORTEURS WANT NEW LAWS FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION ON INTERNET

This year's joint declaration put together by special rapporteurs across the world will address the use of the Internet as it relates to freedom of expression.

The announcement was made during a forum on freedom of expression, hosted by the Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication (CARIMAC) and the Organization of American States at the Mona Visitors' Lodge, University of the West Indies, yesterday.

Michael Camilleri, an Attorney at the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, noted that the 2011 declaration would address issues such as neutrality, liability, censorship and the application of laws that protect freedom of expression.

Representatives of the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, which operates as part of the Organization of American States, are on a four-day academic mission to Jamaica.

Catalina Botero, Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, acknowledged that the laws governing the transmission and accessibility of media need to be crafted according to the nature of the Internet, which has widely accessible content.

She also said it was important to look at how to protect those who transmit content over the Internet. "They are just intermediaries and that's how Internet functions. If you don't protect them, you will condemn freedom of express," Botero said.

Other organizations involved in the drafting of declaration include the United Nations Special

Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression; the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Representative on Freedom of Media; and the African Commission of Human and People's Rights Special Rapporteur on Freedom and Access to Information.