

The Media Association Jamaica Limited is pleased to join in the 20th annual commemoration of World Press Freedom Day (WPFD), being marked this year under the theme "21st Century Media: New Frontiers, New Barriers".

Our environment is certainly reflective of the theme. Our association can certainly speak to New Frontiers in the Media. In a few short years we have seen the introduction of digital technologies, Internet based media, accelerated Social Media activities, even if our internet penetration levels seem low and slow in growth. We have also seen periods of anemic reform efforts, followed by almost aggressive attempts at policy and regulatory change.

As media and media workers come to terms with the rapidly changing environment, increased competition and new policy approaches, we must indeed come to terms with new frontiers and new barriers.

As we commemorate this day we note that in the past 12 months across the world about 100 media workers have been killed. Happily, we have not experienced such tragedy, but let us hasten to note that we cannot be complacent.

Our country, our democracy and our people have benefitted from a relatively free press but we must never ignore signs of potential intimidation, disregard for the role we play on behalf of the 2.7 million Jamaicans on whose behalf we seek information and report stories daily.

Over the years, there have been some challenges and some difficulties but overall our political administrations, our civil society groups and our media have been able to cultivate an environment in which traditional and new media have grown and multiplied. In the past year a mixed bag of activities attended the industry.

Today, we must resolve that whatever challenges now exist cannot be too significant for us to resolve in the interest of freedom of expression, responsibility and democracy. Freedom of expression is nurtured by respect and facilitated by consultation. Our policymakers and regulators can enable our media to grow even more and to flourish by first respecting dialogue, consultation and compromise where positions differ.

In the past year, there has been much about which we have had differing views with policy maker and regulators. Little of those disagreements are matters we cannot resolve. Today, we take the higher road and extend an invitation to our policymakers and our regulators to recommit and reengage in a process to find solutions for the issues that exist.

The Media Association Jamaica Limited (MAJ) salutes all media workers, managers and owners this WPFD and commend you for the work that you continue to do.

We recommit our organisation to the process of meaningful consultation and deliberation of these issues in a respectful, even if dynamic manner.

Gary Allen
Chairman
Media Association Jamaica Limited
May 3, 2011