

# THE MWALIMU NYERERE FOUNDATION



**OPENING SPEECH BY**

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THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MWALIMU NYERERE FOUNDATION**

**AT THE WORLD ASSOCIATION OF PRESS COUNCILS  
(WAPC) CONFERENCE**

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Opening Speech by Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim  
at the World Association of Press Councils (WAPC) Conference

President of the World Association of Press Councils, Mr. Oktay Eksi,  
President of the Media Council of Tanzania, Prof. Geoffrey Mmari,  
Members of the diplomatic corps,  
Distinguished participants,  
Ladies and gentlemen.

First of all I would like to thank the organizers of this conference for choosing Tanzania to be the venue of this year's conference and inviting me to come and share with you some of my thoughts on the important issue of the media in international governance. If it is your first time to come to the land of the Kilimanjaro and Zanzibar, then let me say KARIBU SANA, and KARIBU TENA for those who have been here before. I am sure you will like it. Feel at home.

Mr. Chairperson,

We all acknowledge the important role played by the media in the governance process. They facilitate information flow, which is absolutely necessary for any democracy to exist. Information, one may say, is the oxygen in the life of a democratic nation.

Democracy on the other hand is about people conducting their social, political, economic and spiritual affairs in a free environment that is guided by consideration of the public good and interest. Meaningful participation in those affairs however is only possible when people are empowered with the right information and do have access to the media.

You are gathered here today, having come from countries with different endowments: the economically richest and the poorest, the militarily strongest and the weakest, the most media saturated to the least, and so on. We could enumerate a lot of other differences, but we do have one thing in common, and that is one world, whose problems we share. That is why we have to sit and talk. I am sure at the end of your conference you will be more enlightened on pertinent

issues, and thereby foster a better relationship and understanding. I would prefer to talk to you from the perspective of a developing third world nation, because that is the condition and situation I know better.

In Tanzania, as in many other emerging democracies, the media sector is fully liberalized in line with global trends of democratization. The media are also free, and so are the people whose right to receive and impart information is guaranteed in the constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania. We are in the process of reviewing some of the laws in the country that impact negatively on the performance of the media, and ensure that the media are truly free and responsible.

Mr. Chairperson,

Media liberalization, we hope, will give us diverse and plural media, although this is not a guarantee that it will give all the people media services as anticipated. Private media, as we know, are built on commercial principles of profit and market forces. Unfortunately in the media liberalization process, it is commercial media that have

dominated the scene more than others. As a result, only consumers who are profitable to investors are given the service. In the third world, people live mostly in rural areas, which are more underdeveloped than towns and cities, and where poverty is more rampant. Most rural dwellers cannot afford to purchase newspapers, radio and television receivers. They still rely on interpersonal communication for their information needs. This reality should not be forgotten or ignored.

The poverty prevailing in rural areas keeps investors away on the pretext that their media products do not get markets in those areas. The rural-urban divide gets bigger as poverty increases, and so is the information gap, which also gets bigger between urban and rural people. Media proliferation has not penetrated rural areas to the extent that they become real mass communication media for all the people. As we tackle the bigger problem of poverty alleviation, we should not forget that media are also essential and are a prerequisite in the success of any development endeavor.



Here in Tanzania, we have just issued a new information and broadcasting policy which, amongst others, emphasizes the need for device strategies that would result in provision of media services in areas that do not attract media investors. The government will be required to sensitize, mobilize and create favorable conditions that will enable local governments, community based organizations, non-governmental organizations and individuals to establish media that are appropriate and accessible to all.

Mr. Chairperson,

Apart from reach and accessibility, media that ensures democratic governance must have utility to the information needs of the various communities and segments in society. The young, the old, the professionals, people with disabilities and others have different information needs and tastes, which need to be catered for as a right. The era of the single mass audience is over, and that is why the concept of diverse and plural media has meaning in democracies, which recognize individual and group rights.

The recent wave of media liberalization, in much of the developing world, has seen the establishment of commercial media outlets. In some countries they are now competing with state media, which unfortunately also run on commercial principles. But although the commercial media have become dominant, they are, to my observation, not fulfilling their social roles of information and education. They are very good at entertainment, but even then there are a lot of questions on the kind of entertainment being purveyed by those media. A lot of the entertainment is cheap, outdated, anti-culture, foreign and devoid of educational value.

Mr. Chairperson,

In line with globalization, some countries have attracted foreign investment in the media sector. My fear is that the output of those media is now crippling the culture and right to information of value to the lives of the people. People lose touch with their immediate environment and local issues, and become susceptible to manipulation and exploitation. In our kind of young and underdeveloped economies, commercial media output is low in value

for developmental purposes. To contain the situation, we must have strong and progressively nationalistic regulatory bodies that would guide development of local media. At the same time, we must ensure that the old state media outfits are rapidly transformed into public service media. These would be obliged to reach all parts of the country, cater for the different tastes and interests and target all citizens irrespective of their social, political and religious beliefs. The greatest strength of public service media is the commitment to the education of the people and promotion of national culture. You will agree with me if I say a working democracy is possible only if the people are literate in social and political issues.

Public service media are a governance issue because they ensure that the people are the rightful owners and that they serve interests of the public. They, on the other hand, encourage participation and give the people access to a forum where all citizens are welcome as equals.

Mr. Chairperson,



We in Tanzania do recognize the vital role the Media Council of Tanzania has in making the media more responsible, and that is why we have assigned it functions in the development of the information sector. According to the Information and Broadcasting policy released by the Government in 2003, the Media Council of Tanzania is there to strengthen, monitor and promote high standards of professional practice and adherence to a code of ethics as developed by the profession itself, promote freedom and responsibility of the mass media in cooperation with the players in the industry and to promote cordial relations between the media and the public and among the media themselves. We know that to be able to perform those functions; the Council has to be credible and accepted by the industry. In some countries the relationship is statutory, and in others, like in Tanzania, it is voluntary. This again is a governance issue in a democracy, in that professional institutions in the service sector are democratic and are self-governing, following their own code of conduct. I know this culture is not yet universal, but I think it is worth attempting self-regulation before soliciting the assistance of

legal status, which may not be in the interest of the kind of freedom the media need in order to operate responsibly.

Let me now look briefly at the international media scene in terms of democratic governance. The media as we know can be tools to foster oppression and domination of one nation by another. This is achieved through propaganda and brainwashing. At the global scene, more and more developed countries are establishing strong media to backup their economic, political, social and cultural dominance. In the early days of colonialism, a similar pattern and practice emerged, whereby international radio was started to boost up the empire services that promoted colonialism to the detriment of the colonized. Economic and technological power is likewise being used to develop global media infrastructures and products that will protect and promote the interests of powerful nations. This is a serious issue that should concern us as we ponder on the negative aspects of globalization. The situation is alarming. Take this example which is now common practice in the third world: a local investor applies for a broadcasting frequency, which is a scarce and finite resource,

and after acquiring it hands it over to a foreign government radio service. The output of such a station is official sanctioned information reflecting the views of the foreign broadcaster. Where is the independence of the local radio? A lot of television output in some of our countries is a replay of others' broadcasts. The impact has not yet been measured by us, leave away contemplated about, but what I know is that the system is being embraced because it works in favor of the foreign broadcaster, and not the relay station. Similar inroads are being made into the print media industry. It may be necessary to start a new information order debate, the kind we had in the seventies if the situation continues.

Mr. Chairperson,

Media freedom is not just the liberty to decide on what to publish without interference from any quarter; but it is much more than that. How much freedom is there if some of our governments do allocate meager resources to their media outlets which all the people of a country depend on? How much freedom is there if the primary concern of commercial media is profit by hooks and crooks at the

expense of professionalism? How much freedom is there if governments still own and embrace monopoly media systems that are administration tools? How much freedom is there if information is not guaranteed as a basic right in the constitutions of our countries, including enabling instruments? How much freedom is there if our media practitioners are ignorant of the profession? I could go on and on, but the truth is that media that is not free cannot ensure democratic governance. It will instead aid in the oppression and exploitation of one people by another.

It is therefore important as you deliberate these issues to look at them from the national as well as the international perspective.

Mr. Chairperson,

Ladies and Gentlemen

I hope I have given you some food for thought. I know the complexity of this gathering and the pertinent issues to be addressed, but I hope a consensus can be reached.



It is now my great pleasure and privilege to formally declare this  
World Association of Press Councils Conference opened.

Thank you.