Guidance for Consultations on

Draft Principles for Relevant and Effective Support to Media and the Information Environment

1. Background

The DAC's Network on Governance is looking to consult on new draft principles for relevant and effective support to Media and the Information Environment. In doing so, it is building on a history of engagement on media development, including the 2014 publication of Principles for Effective Media Assistance; a 2019 GovNet-hosted policy dialogue on media development with the aim to 're-prioritise' media in the governance agenda; a GovNet Overview of ODA to governance 2010-2019, showing the limited and static ODA investments in media and free flow of information; and various webinars and plenary meetings on misinformation and disinformation and media viability, convened in the period 2020-2022. During these events various members and media development organisations called upon GovNet and the DAC to sharpen their focus on media and information integrity, to provide clearer operational guidance as to the ways in which ODA could address current challenges to public interest media and the information environment, and most relevant here: to update the principles on media assistance published in 2014.

Much has changed in the almost 10 years since the principles were first introduced. A confluence of financial, social, political, and technological forces now poses an unprecedented threat to media as a democratic institution, journalism as a profession, and information as a public good. In particular, the rise of new technologies, including social media, has had far reaching consequences on information ecosystems. The current global information ecosystem is increasingly dominated by non-traditional media, which has had positive consequences for vibrant public debate, but which has also facilitated a significant rise in mis- and disinformation and hate speech. The new information environment has also led to a collapse of the traditional business model for journalism. Taken together with state capture of media interests, threats to journalist safety, declining public trust in journalism, and growing authoritarianism, these trends pose an existential threat to free and independent media and information integrity and with them, to democracy itself.

The complex and interrelated nature of these challenges requires a fresh and sophisticated approach to development assistance. There is a need for more and better support to media and journalism, contextualised within a larger information ecosystem. The 2014 principles viewed media assistance as support for "editorial independence, financial sustainability, professional capacity, and a lively civil society." Nearly 10 years later, the urgency of needs calls for a renewed and increased commitment to assistance that represents a more strategic response to current challenges, takes a more holistic, systemic approach to public interest media[1], and balances growing tensions between addressing mis/disinformation and respecting freedom of expression and opinion-building, all within the context of ever-evolving information technologies.

With this in mind, a new set of Principles has been prepared by a GovNet working group that consists of six member states (France, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, UK and US), two partner organisations (CIMA and GFMD) and the GovNet Secretariat. These principles were developed on the basis of wide

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1 For a working definition, see Enabling Media Markets to Work for Democracy: An International Fund for Public Interest Media (2021), which defines public interest media as "media that is free and independent, that exists to inform people on the issues that shape their lives, in ways which serve the public's rather than any political, commercial or factional interest, to enable public debate and dialogue across society, and to hold those in power to account on behalf of the public interest."

consultations organised by GFMD and CIMA throughout 2021 and 2022. However, as yet, there has not been consultation on the actual text of the principles.

2. Purpose of the consultations

The consultations will have the following objectives:

- Building consensus and foster a collaborative approach among stakeholders;
- Gathering feedback, inputs and insights from relevant stakeholders to further inform, shape and improve the draft Principles;
- Ensuring inclusivity and transparency in the formulation of the Principles;
- Identifying potential concerns and opportunities associated with the Principles;
- Gathering inputs on how respective stakeholders see their own role in the implementation of these Principles.

3. Key stakeholders

Key stakeholders are:

- All DAC members (not limited to those currently providing support)
- Non-DAC bilateral donors
- Multilateral donors (World Bank, UNDP, UNESCO,…)
- Philanthropic organisations
- Media development organisations, including those based in the global South
- Media houses, especially those based in the global South
- Think tanks/ research or policy organisations (e.g. CIMA…) and NGOs as RSF (Reporters without borders), Nothing2hide, Forbidden Stories etc.

International fora, platforms and network organisations are important stakeholders that may be very helpful in facilitating access to the above groups.

4. Methodology

Consultations can take place in-person and in writing. Various stakeholders can organize consultations but will seek prior consent of the GovNet Secretariat. Stakeholders organising a consultation will provide the GovNet Secretariat with a concise report reflecting the main contributions gathered during each consultation.

In-person consultations will as much as possible be integrated in or attached to relevant events that are already planned. In-person consultations will typically consist of a standard presentation of the draft principles followed by participant contributions centered around three questions:

- Do you have further suggestions which would help them add more value??
- Do you see any potential concerns related to these Principles?
- How do you think you would be able to implement these Principles?

The timeline for consultations is from 15 December 2023 to 9 February 2024.

At the end of the consultation window, the GovNet working group will review all inputs received from the consultations and decide on the contributions that will be retained in an updated version.