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**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,
Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day**

3 May 2020

At a time when we are mired in worry and uncertainty because of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, free information is essential to helping us face, understand, think about and overcome this crisis.

First, we must consider the vital importance of information in this situation: informing the public means giving everyone the means of combatting the illness by adopting appropriate practices.

This is why the Organization has teamed up with the rest of the United Nations family to fight the “infodemic” of rumours and disinformation which is exacerbating the pandemic and putting lives at risk. To help put an end to the problem, we have joined forces to promote two major social-media campaigns, Together for Facts, Science and Solidarity and Don’t Go Viral.

To bolster the effectiveness of these initiatives, UNESCO has also created a COVID-19 resource centre for the media. This online platform aims to help journalists track false information regarding the pandemic and report on the crisis reliably and effectively, as encouraged by the theme of World Press Freedom Day 2020, “journalism without fear or favour”.

This theme is a timely celebration of the work of those who stand up for freedom of information and for an independent press which examines and states the facts.

Too often, we see interference with freedom of the press. Whether this interference involves political, ideological or economic control, defamatory attacks intended to discredit their target, or harassment, too often, it aims to silence journalists - particularly, women journalists. Unfortunately, the extraordinary nature of our present circumstances is aggravating this pressure on journalists.

The ongoing crisis is also increasing economic uncertainty for journalists. For example, at the very moment that the transition to digital technology is picking up speed, advertising revenue, on which many publications depend, is decreasing or even plummeting. Eventually, newspapers could thus be forced to reduce or cease operation, depriving communities of a different perspective on the world, of a focus necessary to the diversity of opinion.

In a world as profoundly interdependent as this crisis has shown ours to be, every threat to or attack on the diversity of the press, the freedom of the press and the safety of journalists concerns us all.

This is why the United Nations system of organizations, together with new coalitions formed by media, governments, and actors from the spheres of law, academia and civil society worldwide, is supporting journalists and their fight for independence and the truth.

Today, I wish to call for a redoubling of these efforts. At this crucial moment and for our future, we need a free press, and journalists need to be able to count on all of us.