



BANGKOK DECLARATION 2003 + 10





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BACKGROUND

Radio and television have been the preferred access mode of mass media by many audiences in Asia Pacific. However, with emerging new information technologies, various multi-delivery and multimedia platforms have dotted the media environment, increasingly threatening the dominance of radio and television. As broadcasters adapt to digital technologies, some have pursued new ways to meet audience demands, expand their business, and contribute to the good of society. Others are taking time to adjust to the new digital world.

Public service broadcasters are also striving to strengthen their position and their attractiveness to audiences.

Political, economic and social realities have also had an impact on the changing media landscape. These include the globalisation phenomenon, the growing digital divide, and inequality between societies.

To deal with these challenges, the 1st Conference of the Ministers of Information and Broadcasting in Asia and the Pacific region was held in Bangkok from 27-28 May 2003. It adopted the Bangkok Declaration 2003, which identified five key recommendations covering globalisation, cultural diversity, digital divide, public service broadcasting, and human resource development.

The Bangkok Declaration 2003 served as the broadcasters' contribution to the thematic debate and to the preparatory meeting of the World Summit on the Information Society held in Geneva in 2003.

The Royal Kingdom of Thailand hosted the Conference, which was organised by the Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) and supported by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), UNESCO, United Nations, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and the Government of France.

Nine years later, AIBD and its key partners met to review the relevance of the declaration. The meeting was held on 13 January 2012 and was hosted by the Thai Public Broadcasting Service (Thai PBS) in Bangkok.

Acknowledging that the Bangkok Declaration 2003 continued to remain valid and relevant, Asia-Pacific broadcasters and key partners have incorporated additional recommendations and called this document the Bangkok Declaration 2003 + 10.

The revised Declaration has a total of 10 key recommendations, including the new themes covering accountability systems for the media, social media, climate change and disasters, empowerment of women, and media in countries of conflict and in transition states.

The Bangkok Declaration 2003 + 10 was presented to AIBD members and partners at the Asia Media Summit held in Bangkok from 29-30 May 2012. Those present suggested a number of changes which have been incorporated in the current declaration.

PREAMBLE

- a. Recognising that a free, responsible and pluralistic media environment is essential for a democratic way of life, particularly for the promotion of transparency, the rule of law, and people's participation in society, and stressing that the media should not only protect and promote press freedom, but also be accountable for their activities;
- b. Considering that globalisation has opened up varied opportunities for better connectivity, increased productivity, enhanced technology transfer, improved standards of living, and assisted in both the production and distribution of information, and in the emergence of free-market deregulation, but mindful that it has also brought about economic disparities and a growing concern over the prospect of global cultural homogenization;
- c. Acknowledging that the media play a key role in the preservation of local cultural identities and the promotion of cultural diversity to enrich the human community, and that the media should take advantage of what globalization offers to assist in their mandate to inform, educate and entertain audiences, and to foster peace and mutual respect for varied cultures;
- d. Mindful of the crucial role that public service broadcasting plays in increasing public awareness, promoting freedom of expression, ensuring free flow of information and ideas, maintaining diversity in the broadcasting sector, and empowering communities, and emphasizing that public service broadcasting should provide programming that serves the public interest and facilitate people's participation in civic development;
- e. Taking into account that the new digital era is opening up communication convergence and increasing interactivity affecting the Internet, telecommunications, television, motion pictures, radio, and distribution of content via satellite, while bringing about a digital divide that needs to be bridged, and conscious of the fact that it has also fragmented audiences, large numbers of whom are increasingly getting engaged in, and seeking participation through, social media and citizen journalism;
- f. Acknowledging that environmental and climate change issues continue to be global concerns confronting the international community, and that media play a critical role in dealing with the impact of climate change and environmental degradation and in helping those who are most vulnerable to their impacts – notably the rural poor – and fully understanding the effects on the lives of such people and their futures;
- g. Recognising that women in many emerging economies and rural areas remain marginalized, under-educated and burdened with relatively poor employment opportunities, and noting that media and ICTs can change this situation and lead the way to achieving social and economic prosperity – not just for women, but also for the whole community;
- h. Recognising that building a media and information literate public is important in empowering viewers and listener to critically make independent choices in selecting programmes and interpreting information from various delivery platforms, and to contribute in promoting professionalism and good ethics in the media industry.

The delegates at the 1st Conference of the Ministers of Information and Broadcasting in the Asia-Pacific Region 2003 and at the Asia Media Summit 2012 adopted the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1 :

• **Media and Globalization**

Media in public and private domains are encouraged to:

- 1.1 be fair and sensitive in reporting news while also being independent from governmental or other sectoral control or interests;
- 1.2 become a fora for public dialogue, knowledge sharing, and promotion of diversity, transparency, accountability, and mutual understanding and tolerance;
- 1.3 create rich, relevant and high quality local content to meet the social expectations and needs of the communities they serve;
- 1.4 introduce and implement a code of conduct to ensure moral and ethical contents, especially when using social media.

Recommendation 2 :

• **Cultural Diversity**

2.1 Unlike ordinary goods, cultural and audiovisual works do not lend themselves to governance by general rules of free exchange for goods and services. They need to be wedded to the ideals of cultural diversity, including the promotion of multi-cultural and multi-ethnic societies, in order to prevent the risk of global standardization. All concerned parties - including governments, civil societies, public and private broadcasters - are encouraged to preserve and promote cultural diversity in their respective countries and to foster dialogue among various cultures internationally.

2.2 All concerned parties are encouraged to:

- a. develop effective regulatory mechanisms to support and encourage public and private radio and television programs aimed at promoting cultural diversity, which translates to plurality of voices and ideas in social dialogue;
- b. create a fund to encourage broadcasters, artists and producers to produce and broadcast programs with local content;
- c. ensure that copyright holders / artists are able to get their proper dues and that the copyright of media products is properly protected;

2.3 The delegates consider UNESCO to be the appropriate UN agency to develop an international normative instrument to protect and promote cultural diversity.

Recommendation 3 :**• Public Service Broadcasting****3.1 Public Service Broadcasters are encouraged to:**

- a. promote education (including community education), spread of information, empowerment and people's participation in society, and development which takes into account the needs and aspirations of all groups in society;
- b. create programs which carry credibility with audiences and which promote cultural diversity and bring the positive effects of globalization to all communities;
- c. create or source rich and quality media content for all, and in particular by and for women, youth and children, ensuring content which promotes violence, communal hatred and other undesirable ills of society;
- d. work towards strengthening and protecting their management and financial autonomy as well as editorial independence;
- e. initiate public debate and consensus-building dialogue between policy-makers, academics and media professionals to counter the negative effects of violence as depicted in the media. Broadcasters should promote a culture of dialogue among civilizations with the view to promoting understanding and peace, countering hate-speech and stereotyping, and fostering sensitive, unbiased and constructive reporting;
- f. exploit new technologies and social media to expand coverage and accessibility to information and healthy entertainment and to enhance people's participation;
- g. promote protection of copyright in content by strongly opposing piracy and unauthorized use of content;
- h. provide free and unlimited access to information and communication to those living in remote and far flung areas.

3.2 All concerned parties, including governments, are encouraged to:

- a. allow maximum autonomy to media professionals and organizations in content creation, management, finance and administration of public service broadcasters;
- b. study and consider the following funding mechanisms for public service broadcasting:
 - levying of a one-time fee during the purchase of radio/television/electronic appliances/mobile phones;
 - introduction of a license fee either as a stand-alone or as an addition to household or commercial electricity bills;
 - offering government grants for infrastructure creation and development;
 - garnering of advertising/sponsorship revenue without undermining the mandate and purpose of public service broadcasting;
- c. contribute to production of programs for clearly defined developmental needs;
- d. regularly review the mandate and purposes of public service broadcasting in the light of national, regional and global events in order to foster mutual understanding, tolerance and trust;
- e. allocate preferential frequencies to public service broadcasters;
- f. create legal structures to allow independence of decision-making to public broadcasters;
- g. ensure allocation of adequate time by private networks for public service programs and for pluralistic content aimed at all groups of society;
- h. ensure complete editorial independence for broadcasters and other media professionals and organizations.

Recommendation 4 :**• Digital Divide**

4.1 All concerned parties are encouraged to make efforts to:

- a. reduce the gap between the potential 'haves' and 'have nots' (including between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels) in access to information and communication technologies and Internet connectivity and in the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively use the information gained, through, for example, the establishment of community multimedia centers;
- b. continue to upgrade broadcast as well as broadband infrastructure, with a view to ensuring universal and affordable access to information and infrastructure;
- c. plan for, and allocate, effectively the 'digital dividend' resulting from the switchover of television from analogue to digital for the benefit of each country;
- d. take reasonable steps to protect the interests of the economically weaker and disadvantaged sections of society in the era of convergence;
- e. foster education on all levels to facilitate the proper use of information and communication technologies to meet the needs and expectations of everyone in society;
- f. create a knowledge-rich society;
- g. facilitate the presence and use of all world languages on the Internet.

4.2 Broadcasters are encouraged to:

- a. expand the reach and coverage of television and radio to promote the spread of information / education;
- b. work out a digital migration plan that takes into account relevant principles, objectives, parameters of standards and applications, and has a clear and achievable timetable and acceptable norms of accountability, consistent with the socio-economic, political and financial conditions prevailing in the country in question;
- c. share, with other countries, experiences in digital migration and identify windows of opportunity to generate social and efficiency gains;
- d. seek the assistance of international organizations like ITU in planning and implementing digital migration.

Recommendation 5 :
• Human Resource Development

5.1 Broadcasters are encouraged, in cooperation with international institutions, to:

- a. regularly upgrade the skills of their journalists and other personnel to foster excellence and independence of reporting for different age groups of viewers, and diversity of cultures and religions, consistent with the ongoing efforts to create a more humane global society;
- b. train all levels of personnel in all aspects of broadcasting and multimedia, including management and leadership;
- c. develop an effective code of ethics, which reflects high professional standards and commitment to peace and fair and impartial reporting and respect for other cultures.

5.2 Given the emerging concerns on the impact of content on national, regional and international developments, AIBD is mandated for:

- a. an independent and fair global network to promote public service broadcasting which would promote peace, harmony and goodwill through credible coverage of world events and the promotion of pluralism;
- b. a forum for interaction between broadcasters and policy-makers to regularly debate issues of topical concern;
- c. training in emerging areas of interest such as convergent journalism, citizen journalism and social media, including legal and ethical aspects of them, and on ways and means of taking advantage of new technologies;
- d. a forum to debate the changing mandate and objectives of public service broadcasting in light of the emerging global environment.

Recommendation 6 :**• Media's Accountability System**

- 6.1 Freedom of expression and media freedom remain cornerstones of a responsible media environment. These freedoms demand a great sense of responsibility and accountability on the part of the media as these contribute to the building of public trust.
- 6.2 Towards this end, broadcasters are encouraged to:
- a. establish and strengthen accountability systems such as the adoption of effective codes of ethics, continuous training and educational programs for journalists, appointment of ombudsmen, and use of correction boxes, audience surveys, and citizen feedback mechanisms, among others;
 - b. identify clear roles and responsibilities, and goals and performance expectations, which can be agreed to by all concerned parties. Those responsible should review and give feedback on their and others' performance, and provide recommendations for improvement;
 - c. highlight and share best practices in the formulation and operation of accountability systems.

Recommendation 7 :**• Media and Environment**

7.1 Climate Change

While media have in varying degrees contributed to public awareness and individual and collective action in dealing with the impact of climate change on people, animals, ecosystems, governments, companies, economies, etc., they can do more to encourage their own organizations and audiences to show interest, help educate the public and shape public policy in this area.

7.2 Broadcasters are encouraged to:

- a. adopt a policy that calls for a change of mindset, meets their specific needs, and contributes effective responses to deal with climate change;
- b. increase the quantity and quality of information provided to their audiences on the effects of climate change, and on ways to minimize pollution and improve the environment;
- c. maximize use of new media, particularly social media, to tell stories about the effects of and responses to climate change;
- d. pursue media training on climate change to further sensitize managers, editors, journalists and other staff;
- e. urge scientists, policy makers and climate change experts to work with editors, actors and artists to disseminate news and views on climate change and related information, using grass-roots approaches and working in an engaging fashion;
- f. simplify the message of climate change, as far as reasonably possible, by using the vernacular language and various program genres such as dramas, talk shows, stories, and other media tools for the benefit of local audiences;

- g. tap radio extensively in reaching local communities with targeted messages;
- h. encourage advertisers to support environment and climate change campaigns to raise public awareness, support and involvement in this area.

7.3 All concerned parties are encouraged to:

- a. forge partnerships with media organizations in order to jointly fund the training of journalists and editors, particularly in developing countries;
- b. allocate budgets to support the broadcast of user-friendly, climate change-related articles and stories through such formats as documentaries, public service announcements and 'infomercials';
- c. partner with donors and development partners that are supporting climate change programs in developing countries and regions.

7.4 Disasters

The Asia-Pacific region is home to many types of disasters that have brought destruction to properties and the environment and injury and death to millions of people. Media play a vital role in educating the public and acting as a catalyst to bring about change in dealing with disasters.

7.5 For this purpose, broadcasters are encouraged to:

- a. provide as much coverage to the whole disaster management spectrum including prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and development;
- b. improve the accuracy, timeliness, quality, and cost-effectiveness of the information disseminated by them;

- c. practice responsible and ethical journalism and foster greater sensitivity in dealing with the victims of disaster;
- d. ensure physical and mental preparation for journalists covering disasters, and better protection and safety for journalists; they should also include reasonable compensation in case of death and injury;
- e. introduce and strengthen media training in disaster management. The scope of such training should include formulation of, and adherence to, proper guidelines in covering events in communities, interviewing trauma and disaster victims, writing about victims, and handling ethical issues, among others;
- f. produce popular program genres such as drama and comedy designed to reach wider audiences;
- g. tap various delivery platforms, in particular social media, to empower people, individually and collectively, to take practical steps to protect themselves from natural hazards and to demand attention by private and governmental organizations in prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and development;
- h. develop and promote cooperation and partnership with scientific and disaster-mitigation agencies in strengthening working relationships, public awareness and other initiatives to deal with disasters. A basic code to promote cooperation between media and disaster-mitigation agencies needs to be developed.

Recommendation 8 :**• Media's Accountability System**

- 8.1 Social media websites have become an important source of information and a popular platform for networking, feedback and engagement. Different generations use them differently as these platforms expand in the Asia-Pacific region where there is a growing young population. More people are creating and distributing information, and determining the choice of messages that may shape society in this region.
- 8.2 Broadcasters acknowledge that while radio and television remain the dominant medium, audiences are increasingly viewing television while using a second device and integrating with social media. They need to keep pace with technology and various delivery platforms, and exploit the synergy between traditional media and social media.
- 8.3 Broadcasters are encouraged to:
- a. professionalize their approach towards user content and social media. In using social media, broadcasters should adopt a strategic approach, aim to be different, and seek a meaningful engagement with the audience;
 - b. develop and adopt internal rules for social media to maintain brand identity and journalistic standards. These rules could be based on common sense and existing journalistic standards;
 - c. tap social media for coverage of anti-corruption campaigns, disaster prevention and mitigation, building volunteer movements, and other relevant initiatives;
 - d. promote better use by journalists of social media in reporting, collaborating in the production of stories, getting closer to sources and generating the feedback essential for a better understanding of how audiences relate to the broadcaster's brand;
 - e. contribute towards social media awareness so that the public are offered clear guidelines to be able to navigate better in the new media world;

- f. use social media in influencing program development and producing for niche shows which would in turn generate bigger advertising revenues;
- g. exploit social media sites for professional networking and development of training programs for career development and advancement programs;
- h. guard against those who use social media to disseminate rumors, disinformation, and personal attacks, thus ensuring that professional and ethical standards are upheld.

Recommendation 9 :**• Empowerment of Women**

9.1 Media and ICTs offer tools for preventing and combating gender inequality and the perpetuation of existing inequalities and discrimination, especially among women. Increasing women's access to, and participation in these tools can empower them to contribute to development and the growth of strong economies.

9.2 Broadcasters are encouraged to:

- a. promote a gender perspective within their organizations and their various broadcast programs, including in the area of resource allocation for training of media professionals;
- b. publicize success stories and best practices to counter gender stereotyping, negative portrayals, and exploitation of women, in all forms of media and ICTs, as part of their initiatives to reduce, if not eliminate, discrimination and violence against women;
- c. portray images consistent with human dignity of girls and women and work towards elimination of demeaning, degrading and negative conventional stereotypical images of women and of violence against women;
- d. develop and implement codes of conduct, professional guidelines, and other self-regulatory mechanisms to remove gender stereotypes and promote balanced portrayals of women and men;
- e. support research into all aspects of the impact of media and ICTs on women and girls, in particular into their information needs and interests.

9.3 All concerned parties are encouraged to:

- a. exploit ICTs and broadband to influence public attitudes towards gender equality, creation of employment opportunities for women, education, and health, and for networking and organizing for gender equality, as well as female engagement in political processes;
- b. pursue pro-active steps to accelerate access to broadband infrastructure and the use of broadband-enabled services by women and girls.

Recommendation 10 :**• Media in Countries of Conflict and in Transitional States**

- 10.1 In conflict and post-conflict zones as well as in countries in transition, news media have an enormous potential for good and evil. They can be exploited for misinformation, and hatred. They can also offer news and information critical for the successful working of democracy. Their primary duty is to truth. In discharging this duty, many journalists face danger to their lives, including kidnapping, injury and death.
- 10.2 Acknowledging that different circumstances require different approaches, broadcasters are encouraged to:
- a. uphold and protect the values of journalism, particularly press freedom, that can contribute to the growth of peaceful and democratic societies, and for the achievement of durable economic development;
 - b. ensure reporting and distribution of reliable, balanced and credible information in violent conflicts and their aftermath as this is important in dealing with war zones and relief aid, and in gaining people's trust. Broadcasters should use as wide a range of languages as may be practicable so that they are better understood by their target audiences;
 - c. offer training to journalists in conflict and post-conflict situations to better equip them in upholding professional and ethical standards;
 - d. strengthen media's role as a means of communication between elected governments and their constituents and as a peaceful platform for analysis, discussions for communities to better understand, participate in and decide on conflict related and developmental issues;
 - g. pursue ways and means of constructive collaboration with other parties to facilitate the exchange and pooling of knowledge and resources on the safety of journalists and other media personnel.

10.3 All concerned parties are encouraged to:

- a. adopt clear media policies consistent with international standards and best practices;
- b. develop the communication infrastructures necessary to enable people to receive broadcast signals and, technology permitting, the Internet, and to access news and other forms of public communication;
- c. develop public service broadcasting as an integral part of a healthy media environment that is pluralistic and diverse and able to present as many views and opinions and as much information as possible;
- d. respect the media's right to work in conditions of reasonable safety and acknowledge the media's vital contribution to building sustainable peace, democracy and economic development.

IMPLEMENTATION AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

To give this Declaration more meaning and relevance to broadcasters and its stakeholders, and to assist them in implementing its recommendations, broadcasters urge all concerned parties to agree to:

- a. promote this document, and in particular its recommendations, through traditional and new delivery platforms within their organization;
- b. seek out best practices in implementing these recommendations;
- c. partner and collaborate with regional and international organizations in promoting and operationalizing these recommendations. AIBD is urged to bring up this Declaration before regional and international seminars and workshops;
- d. hold seminars and workshops as a platform for continuous discussion and debate, and for the generation of other responses to ensure a more effective and relevant broadcast industry;
- e. undertake a review of this Declaration at periodic intervals to ensure its continuing relevance.

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