

Keynote speech

Role of a Journalist in Moving towards a sustainable media environment

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I am keenly aware of the historical significance of this conference. What we see in this room today is a unique multi-partner, multi-stakeholder enterprise. We have government officials, journalists, owners, editors, reporters, NGOs, local, regional and international.

This is a unique model of collaboration and partnership. Our accomplishments will be an inspiration for governments and civil society around the world, China included. I hope the leaders in Beijing will follow what's emerging as the Myanmar model of media development very closely.

I first visited Myanmar three years ago in 2011, soon after the reform process began. I have since visited Yangon every few months and have witnessed historic changes. During my many visits, I have been fortunate to meet many of you and to learn from you about the exciting changes that are taking place in the news media here. Speakers before me have cited many of these incredible reforms that have taken place in the short space of three years.

I share with you the excitement at the transformations taking place. I also envy you for your historical opportunities to create a news media system from the ground up. But I am also keenly aware of the historical challenges faced by the media here, which is reflected on the

agenda of this conference. Over the next two days, we are going to explore issues such as ethics, media regulation, public broadcasting, public service, ethnic voices, election reporting, and press councils.

In the parlance of today's media development language, sustainability has become a buzzword in the media development world. It is an idea that our media need to be able to support themselves financially. How can we do well and make money at the same time? This is a million dollar, or even multi-million dollar question, that the media around the world are grappling with.

I believe that by the end of the day, money will follow journalism that is credible and relevant to the people. Somehow good journalism will survive and thrive, because the people need it. By good journalism, I mean the journalism that is free, accountable and transparent.

The importance of media development in social, economic and political progress has been well documented. A review of the literature on the relationship between the media and development commissioned by the Media Development Investment Fund summed up the findings under these headings:

- Media improves governance by monitoring the actions of those in power and alerting the public to corruption or abuse of trust.
- Media improves the efficiency of the economy by providing more and better information with which to make decisions and improving stability.

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- Media catalyses positive changes in society by providing the information that influences public opinion.

We should recognise that media development is an integral part of social and economic development, not just a tool for development. It is heartening that the Myanmar government has fully embraced the vision, and is working hard to turn the vision into reality.

Asia is arising. And it is up to us to tell the stories with the best tools of journalism available. As chair of ASEAN for the first time since joining ASEAN 17 years ago, Myanmar is playing a more active role in regional and international affairs. In

fact, Myanmar will take a leadership role in ASEAN, and Asia, under the theme for the chair it has set for itself: "Moving Forward in Unity to a Peaceful and Prosperous Community."

The Myanmar media are facing historical opportunities and challenges. Myanmar is the one of the hottest stories in the world. The world's investors, governments, educators and journalists are dying to learn about what's happening here. Myanmar media can play a role in moving the media in Burma towards a sustainable environment. A journalist can and must play a critical role in fostering a sustainable media environment.