

Speech by the UN Resident Coordinator in Nepal

World Press Freedom Day 2025

Theme: “*Reporting in the Brave New World: The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Press Freedom and the Media*”

Venue: Hyatt Centric, Kathmandu | Date: 4 May 2025

Excellencies, colleagues, members of the media, friends,

In a world increasingly divided by war, disinformation, and inequality, World Press Freedom Day reminds us of something essential:

Freedom for people depends on freedom of the press.

A free, independent, and ethical press is not a luxury—it is a necessity. It is the voice that holds power to account, that protects rights, and that brings truth into the light.

But that voice is under threat.

Journalists around the world face harassment, detention, censorship, violence—and, too often, death—for simply doing their jobs.

And nowhere is this more tragic today than in Gaza, where far too many media workers have paid the ultimate price for their commitment to truth.

When journalists are silenced, we all lose.

This year’s theme—“*Reporting in the Brave New World*”—could not be more relevant. We are entering a digital era where Artificial Intelligence is transforming how we access and share information.

AI can be a force for good—helping us analyze, translate, predict. But it can also be used to distort, deceive, and divide.

Biased algorithms. Deepfakes. Online hate. Misinformation.

These are the new landmines on the information highway.

And so, the challenge before us is urgent and clear:

How do we ensure AI serves democracy, not undermines it?

The United Nations is stepping up.

- The Global Digital Compact, endorsed last year, offers a framework for promoting integrity and trust in the digital world.

- The Global Principles for Information Integrity are guiding our efforts to ensure that facts—not falsehoods—drive public discourse.
- UNESCO, our key agency for media development and freedom of expression, has taken the lead in advocating for ethical AI governance. Its landmark "Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence"—adopted unanimously by 193 Member States—outlines principles of human rights, transparency, non-discrimination, and accountability in the use of AI.
- These frameworks are rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—particularly Article 19, which guarantees the right to freedom of expression and access to information. They also connect directly to SDG 16.10: ensuring public access to information and protecting fundamental freedoms

Here in South Asia, and in Nepal, the stakes are real.

This region has long been home to courageous, vibrant, and essential journalism.

But today, many media professionals face growing economic pressure, shrinking civic space, and digital insecurity.

The move toward freelance and gig-based reporting raises new questions around labour rights and sustainability.

In Nepal, we see both progress and concern:

- There is growing awareness of journalists' rights, better digital literacy, and a more connected media community.
- But economic vulnerability, gaps in legal protections, and new legislative developments around media and social platforms call for scrutiny and inclusive dialogue.

We must also pause to honour the memory of Suresh Rajak and Suresh Bhul, two Nepali journalists who tragically lost their lives this past year.

Nepal remains safer than many countries, but these losses are a stark reminder: even here, journalism carries risk.

Their lives and work call us to do more—to protect, to empower, to ensure no truth-teller stands alone.

As the UN Resident Coordinator, I am proud to say that the UN in Nepal is actively supporting:

- Media literacy and AI ethics training,
- Efforts to combat technology-facilitated gender-based violence,
- Legal reforms to strengthen freedom of expression and press accountability,

- And support for public-interest journalism and journalist safety.

Regionally, UNESCO's work on AI and media viability, especially its training for women journalists, is helping to build a media community that is both resilient and rights-based.

But this is not just about support. It's about responsibility.

AI reflects the values we encode in it. So let's ask ourselves:

Are we building systems that amplify diverse voices—or silence them?

Are we designing digital platforms that promote truth—or bury it under algorithms of outrage?

We must respond with three actions:

1. Governments must regulate AI in ways that protect—not restrict—press freedom.
2. Media institutions must adopt transparent, inclusive, and ethical digital practices.
3. And across South Asia, we need regional solidarity to build a more just, informed, and humane media ecosystem.

Let me leave you with this:

We are standing at a crossroads.

One road leads to deeper division, disinformation, and distrust.

The other—if we choose it—leads to transparency, accountability, and freedom.

Let this World Press Freedom Day be more than reflection. Let it be a recommitment.

A recommitment to facts over falsehoods, to integrity over influence, to journalism over noise.

As the United Nations, we are with you.

Not just in words, but in action.

Together, let us shape an AI-powered future that informs, not misleads; empowers, not endangers; and connects, not divides.

Thank you.