

PRESS RELEASE.

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World Radio Day 2023

IMS Calls for Strengthening Radio, Providing Enabling Environment.

The Institute for Media and Society, IMS, calls for deliberate efforts on the part of stakeholders to strengthen radio broadcasting and provide for it enabling environment so that it can remain a strong tool for peace and development.

This call is made on the background of today's World Radio Day, an annual event established by the United Nations to celebrate the impact and importance of radio as a medium for information, entertainment and social and cultural development.

While felicitating with the Nigerian media community and other stakeholders, we submit that the theme for this year's edition of the World Radio Day, "Radio and Peace", is timely and apt especially within the context of the upcoming 2023 general election, an important element of democratic practice.

Radio in Nigeria has a long and rich history and remains an important tool for connecting us together as one people.

In recent years, the Nigerian radio landscape has expanded significantly with hundreds of licenses issued, and new technologies and platforms expanding its reach and impact. These developments should be seen as opportunities for using radio in helping to foster greater understanding, reducing tensions and promoting peace.

IMS urges journalists and other media professionals to ensure conflict-sensitive and inclusive reporting to promote peace. The nation is at a crucial juncture and it is important that professionalism is continuously deployed as a tool for managing tension and keeping citizens and election stakeholders together before, during and after the elections.

We urge media professionals to help create an atmosphere of balanced, fair and accurate programming that help voters to make informed decisions in choosing their representatives.

However, the media can only be effective in the discharge of its responsibilities only in an environment of freedom. The environment of media practice in Nigeria is still replete with encumbrances. Journalists are still victims of attack, arrest, detention and prosecution under all manner of vicious legislations. Regulator cannot be expected to protect the liberty of professionals when the regulator itself is also stifled. Policies, legislations, regulations and practices that hinder professionals in the electoral process and beyond must therefore, be removed.

Hence, we call on:

- a. security agencies to demonstrate full understanding of the role of journalists and other media professionals in the electoral process and provide protection for them.
- b. political parties to orientate their representatives on the election field on the need to co-operate with journalists.
- c. regulatory agencies to prioritise the protection of the freedom of journalists and the media.
- d. the federal government to complete the broadcasting sector reforms it initiated in 2019, in line with international standards.
- e. the National Assembly to complete the amendment process of the NBC Act, paying priority attention to the independence and secure funding of the regulator, transparency of the licensing process, plurality of the landscape and liberty of the Media.

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