

**Address by Professor Hopeton Dunn,
Director of the Caribbean Institute of Media and
Communication (CARIMAC) UWI, and
Chairman of the Broadcasting Commission of Jamaica
to the
World Press Freedom Day Forum hosted by the
Press Association of Jamaica and CARIMAC
on May 4, 2015 at
CARIMAC Lecture Room, UWI, Mona**

Mrs Dionne Jackson Miller, President, Press Association of
Jamaica, and other Executive Committee Members of the PAJ

Members of the Panel

Carimac Colleagues

Other members of the media fraternity

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning!

Let me welcome you here on behalf of CARIMAC and thank the PAJ and its dynamic President, Mrs Dionne Jackson Miller, for approaching CARIMAC to be a partner in this year's World Press Freedom Day event.

Importance of WPF

World Press Freedom Day is an annual occasion worth celebrating, not because, of course, the whole world enjoys or values press freedom, but because it is a goal and a cause to be actively promoted and defended globally, especially where it is threatened or is non-existent.

Since we last celebrated World Press Freedom Day in 2014, we are told that conditions for global media and its practitioners deteriorated to its lowest point in comparison with conditions in the preceding ten (10) years. According to the 2015 Report of **Freedom House**, journalists around the world faced mounting restrictions on the free flow of news and information— including grave threats to their own lives through wars, repressive regimes, insurgencies such as IS and from armed conflicts or attacks - notably these took place and are on-going especially in the Middle East, Europe, Africa and Asia.

Freedom House - Global Figures

According to the 2015 Freedom House Report: **"The share of the world's population that enjoys a free press stood at 14 percent, meaning only one in seven people live in countries where coverage of political news is robust, the safety of journalists is guaranteed, state intrusion in media affairs is minimal, and the press is not subject to onerous legal or economic pressures."**

Journalists Without Borders Ranking

Fortunately, Jamaica continues to rank highly in terms of Press Freedom in the Caribbean, Latin America and the World. **The 2015 Press Freedom Index for 180 countries, compiled by the organization 'Journalists Without Borders' was recently released.** In it, Jamaica is accorded the single highest ranking country for Press Freedom in the Caribbean and the entire Latin American region. And globally we are in the top ten of 180 countries. Jamaica is now located at number 9, having moved up several places since last year. Only Costa Rica, at global number 16, ranks anywhere near Jamaica in Latin America and the Caribbean.

That by any measure is commendable!

Top Ten

The top ten list on which we find ourselves, is dominated, as often is the case in the past, by the Scandinavian countries of Finland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden, alongside The Netherlands, New Zealand, Austria, Canada and Estonia. The absence from the global top 20 listing of certain leading industrialised countries, such as the United States, Britain, Australia and France, is an indication that freedom of the press can be threatened or undermined regardless of the level of a country's economic development, its ideology or geographical location.

And while we in Jamaica do enjoy a high level of press freedom, it is not good enough to be the single stand-out in the whole region or to be complacent. We have to engage with our neighbours even more actively through enhanced training of journalists and through publicised seminars such as this one.

Media School

Within the next month, CARIMAC, in association with the PAJ, will step up its continuing training role by launching **Weekend Media Master Classes** for in-service journalists and other serving practitioners, such as reporters, photographers, cartoonists and bloggers.

We look forward to the continued support of the PAJ, Media Owners and the practitioners themselves to help underpin our national high ranking in press freedom with unassailably high quality of our media output, whether on-air or in the printed and online media.

Beneficial Factors

Among the factors that have enabled Jamaica to keep its high ranking is the persistent advocacy and vigilance of the PAJ, building on over 7 decades of its existence since 1943, and with a constitution and well established Code of Ethics of 1965.

We also have to ascribe some credit to our **governments over the years** and to legislators, training organizations such as CARIMAC, civil society leaders and citizens who have helped to preserve our proud tradition, despite (or perhaps given..) dramatic changes in media technology, legislative reforms and the dynamic media policy landscape.

The Access to Information Act of 2004 is just one mechanism that is available to journalists and others to seek or even demand information and to aid in the fight against corruption.

In closing let me say that I am pleased that the role of our Information Access Act will be fore-grounded for discussion at this forum and I look forward to the rest of our deliberations.

Thank you!