



**ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNICATION SCHOLARS
& PROFESSIONALS OF NIGERIA**
... the future is here

**COMMUNIQUE AT THE END OF THE 8TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE
ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNICATION SCHOLARS & PROFESSIONALS OF
NIGERIA (ACSPN) AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

HELD WEDNESDAY 1ST & THURSDAY 2ND SEPTEMBER, 2021

1.0 Preamble

The Association of Communication Scholars & Professionals of Nigeria (ACSPN) held its 8TH Annual Conference with the theme: “**Media and Citizens Participation in Governance for Accountability and Peace in Society**” between September 1 and 2, 2021. The conference was organised in partnership with River State University Port Harcourt (RSU) and UNESCO.

The 2-day hybrid Conference (virtual and physical), attracted participants from different parts of the country and overseas.

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The President of the Association and Vice Chancellor of the Federal University, Kashere, Professors Umaru A. Pate, noted in his welcome address, that there is doubt that the media have the constitutional role to hold the government accountable, and is a veritable tool to promote peace in the society. However, the media ability to perform these roles are affected by issues of poor funding, competition from social media, safety of journalists and decline in media credibility. For media to promote peace and facilitate citizen participation in governance, those challenges need to be addressed. He expressed the appreciation of the partnership and support of the Vice Chancellor and the Management of Rivers State University, and UNESCO. He commended the effort of the LOC and welcomed members.

The Vice Chancellor, Rivers State University and host, Professor Nlerum Sunday Okogbule, in his remark, noted that the media has a large role in entrenching democracy in Nigeria and that role should not be underestimated. He stated that the cost of governance in Nigeria is too high and the press has the responsibility to investigate and set agenda on ways to cut such cost. This, he said can be achieved by harnessing the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, and that the media has a duty to facilitate citizen participation in governance and promoting sustainable peace.

There were goodwill messages from Dr. Richard Amadi - HOD, Mass Communication, Rivers State University and the Honourable Commissioner of Information and Communication, Rivers State, Pastor Paulinus Nsirim.

The keynote address on the “Role of the Media in Accountable Government and Peace in Society”, was presented by Dr. Jossy Nkwocha [FNIPR] Group Head, Corporate Communications, Indorama Eleme Petrochemicals and Fertilizer Ltd.

The Lead paper for Day 1: “Driving Development Through Targeted Engagements”, was presented by Mr. Igo Weli General Manager, External Affairs, Shell Petroleum Development Company, Port Harcourt, and discussed by Professor Ayobami Ojebode, Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan.

The Lead Paper for Day 2, “Saving Journalism and Regulating Big Tech: What Could Work in Africa?”, was presented by Anya Schiffrin, Director of the Technology, Media, and Communications (TMaC) specialization, and a lecturer at the School of International and Public Affairs, at Columbia University, USA and discussed by Prof. Oluyinka Esan, ACSPN Deputy President.

The Female Researchers Panel on “Governance, Women, Media, and Inclusive Society”, featured Prof. Eylem Atakav, University of East Anglia, UK who made a presentation on “Academic Activism, Social Impact and Story telling.” Discussants included, Hon. (Mrs). Inime Aguma Commissioner for Women Affairs, Rivers State, Ms. Constance Ikokwu, Doctoral researcher, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain, Dr. Titilayo Osuagwu Lecturer, Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Ms Ngozi Marion Emmanuel - PhD researcher, University of Leicester, England & Lecturer, Department of Mass Communication, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State.

Dr. Lasisi Olagunju, Editor, Saturday Tribune made the special panel presentation on the “Media are not Dead? Are Canons Shifting? The discussants were Dr. Chido Onumah Coordinator, African Centre for Media & Information Literacy, Abuja & Vice President, ACSPN North-Central, Lead Discussant, and Dr. Ahmad Shehu, American University of Nigeria, Yola.

There were three masterclasses, two by Dr Ola Ogunyemi, University of Lincoln, UK, on “Documenting the Research Process” and “Publishing in Refereed Journals”, while Mrs. Florence Olumodimu, Programme Director, DigifyProNG, presented on “Leveraging Digital: Building a Personal Brand”.

2.0 Observations

The conference observed that:

1. Journalists are the only professionals given a role in chapter 2 of the 1999 constitution to hold government accountable to the people.
2. The media have the duty to promote peace in the society
3. That while it is important for the media to hold government accountable, it is necessary to note that there is a decline in societal or national value
4. New media technology is key to facilitating citizen participation in governance
5. The media have the responsibility to always examine the facts before reportage
6. A vibrant media and citizen participation are central to governance
7. Media portrayal of women is often not favourable to the course of women
8. Women participation in media is low and there has been a failure to utilise the media even when the opportunities are available

9. Poor implementation of the Freedom of Information Act is affecting media role in holding government accountable
10. Journalists lacking in upholding and promoting professional ethic, which affect media credulity
11. The problem of safety of journalists affects media ability to hold government accountable
12. Journalists are deficient in peace journalism skills, thereby affecting their ability to promote peace.
13. Funding and credibility are major challenges of the media in performing their roles in holding government accountable
14. There are legislation deliberately designed to curb and limit the role of the media in holding the government accountable
15. Government funding could compromise the independence of the media in objectively performing their roles, especially holding government accountable

3.0 Resolutions and Recommendations

At the end of the conference, the following resolutions and recommendations were adopted. That:

1. Media organisations should explore new business models to address the challenges of funding
2. Journalists should advocate for media development fund that should support media organisations
3. Journalist should advocate for bailout support for the media as is the case with other sectors, especially in difficult times, such as the pandemic or recession
4. Media organizations should collaborate and engage stakeholders for necessary support
5. Citizens need to go back to the value system and own up and not blame government for every societal problem
6. Media literacy should be encouraged and funded by the government and other funding bodies to ensure that citizens understand ways to engage the media more appropriately
7. Journalists should uphold and promote professional ethics to ensure adherence and credibility in the media
8. Women should be more proactive in engaging with the media by exploring available avenues, such as media phone in programmes, new media platforms, films, among others, to tell their stories
9. Media organisations should focus on training and retraining of journalists, to enable them update skills and knowledge on current issues
10. Journalists' safety should be taken more seriously by media organisations which should ensure robust insurance schemes and hazard provisions for journalists
11. Media organisation should ensure that the welfare of journalists is taken seriously to ensure that they effectively carryout their roles without compromise
12. Media should constantly remind citizens of their obligation to uphold societal values

13. Journalists should fully harness the benefits of Freedom of Information Act to hold government accountable
14. Media organizations should ensure easy access to the media for their audience, to enhance their participation in governance through the media



Prof Nosa Owens-Ibie
General Secretary
September 8, 2021