

STATEMENT ON STRENGTHENING DIALOGUE WITH ONLINE PLATFORMS ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT AND IN THE FRENCH-SPEAKING AREA

The member institutions of the French-Speaking Network of Media Regulators (REFRAM) and the member institutions of the African Communication Regulatory Authorities Network (ACRAN), meeting at a joint conference in Abidjan on 23 and 24 April 2024;

Considering the objectives of their respective networks, as set out in their statutes, in particular the commitment to defend cultural diversity and to promote media pluralism in the context of strengthening the Rule of Law and democracy;

Considering the roadmaps of their respective networks aimed in particular at adapting audio-visual regulation to the issues and challenges raised by online platforms;

Considering the Statement of the Heads of State and Government members of the International Organisation of La Francophonie, adopted on 20 November 2022 in Djerba, in particular paragraphs 24 to 32;

Considering the multi-stakeholder consultations and global dialogue led by UNESCO "*Internet for Trust*" and the resulting "*Principles for the regulation for the digital platforms*", aimed in particular at contributing to the global coherence of related policies in order to avoid fragmentation of the Internet;

Considering the most recent legislations regarding online platforms regulation, such as the European Digital Services Act;

Considering the key role played by online platforms in society, and the issues and challenges that derive from this in terms of fundamental rights protection, in particular freedom of expression, the right to receive a reliable, high-quality, information, and the right to be protected from hateful content and discrimination in all of their forms;

Considering the role of media regulators in safeguarding and promoting freedom of expression, pluralism of currents of thought and opinion, and the protection of the audience; Considering the relevance and legitimacy of these institutional stakeholders in contributing to the development of digital environment respectful of democracy and human rights and fostering cultural and linguistic diversity;



Reaffirm their commitment to defending cultural diversity, promoting pluralism of currents of thought and opinion, and protecting fundamental rights, in particular freedom of expression, the right to benefit from reliable, high-quality information, and the right to be protected from hateful content and discrimination in all of their forms;

Reaffirm their will to strengthen dialogue between their respective networks and the representatives of the very large online platforms;

Welcome the constructive exchanges between their respective networks and the very large online platforms, in particular the commitments made by the participants at the Abidjan conference to perpetuate a high-level, structured and regular dialogue within an ad hoc forum made up of representatives of the two networks and the very large online platforms.

Invite the very large online platforms to implement those commitments with a view to continuous dialogue and improvement, with the following objectives in particular:

1. To designate a single point of contact for the concerned public authorities, with sufficient capacity to ensure direct and effective communication with the members of REFRAM and ACARAN; and to designate a point of contact for users of online platforms so that they can interact with the latter through electronic means;
2. To make available in the official languages of each country, whose regulatory authority is a member of REFRAM or ACARAN, in clear and comprehensible language, the general conditions of use of their services, as well as their policies and means for moderating content uploaded by users, advertising or propaganda messages and news content.
3. To implement mechanisms that are simple to use and easily accessible to all in order to report the presence on their services of content that would be considered illegal or contrary to the platform's terms of use.
4. To put in place measures to ensure a high level of confidentiality, safety and security for underage users.
5. To put in place policies and means for moderating content shared or broadcast in all the official languages of REFRAM or ACARAN member countries, adapted to national and regional contexts, and to provide explanation to users who have been affected by moderation of content published on the platform;
6. To implement appropriate transparency measures, that can serve as a basis for structured dialogue between the members of the two networks and the representatives of the very large online platforms on the African continent and in the French-speaking area;

7. To ensure the use of algorithmic recommendation systems favouring a diversity of information sources, in particular so as not to contribute to the reinforcement of possible cultural or geopolitical polarisations, and to encourage the provision of a diversity of content for users.

In the same spirit, encourage the very large online platforms:

8. To facilitate access for researchers, particularly from the African and French-speaking world, to the data and application interfaces of very large online platforms under conditions that guarantee respect and protection of users' personal data and the confidentiality of algorithmic processes protected by business secrecy.
9. To recognise the eminent role of associations, collectives, non-governmental organisations, and more generally, bodies recognised in civil society on the African continent and in the French-speaking area as trusted signatories, which are able to make well-founded and well-argued requests to facilitate their processing by the very large platforms or regulatory authorities.
10. To elaborate and publish codes of good practices to reduce the impact of systemic risks leading to the large-scale dissemination of content likely to undermine the pluralism of currents of thought and opinion and their free expression, to harm the intellectual and moral development of users, in particular minors, to convey hate speech or to lead to violence based on ethnic, religious, gender, age, disability or any other discriminatory grounds.

Members of the French-Speaking Network of Media Regulators and of the African Communication Regulatory Authorities Network intend to make their dialogue with the very large online platforms a long-term process, to encourage monitoring and improvements in connection with legal evolutions and global trends.

Adopted in Abidjan on 24 April 2024

For the REFRAM

The Chair,



Mr. Roch-Olivier MAISTRE

For the RIARC

The Chair,



Mrs Latifa AKHARBACH