

## Concept Note WPF2024 Geneva

Working Title: A Press for the Planet: Protecting Journalists and Scientists in Defense of the Environment

Practical Information: 7<sup>th</sup> of May from 15:00-18:00. Palais des Nations, Room XXIII.

### Concept:

30 years after the first World Press Freedom Day celebration in 1994, and the adoption of the historic [Santiago Declaration](#), Chile and UNESCO will host [World Press Freedom Day \(WPF2024\)](#) in Santiago from 2-4 May. WPF2024 will be dedicated to the importance of journalism and freedom of expression in the context of the current global environmental crisis. It aims to highlight the significant role that the press, journalism, and access to information play to ensure and secure a sustainable future that respects the rights of individuals, the diversity of their voices, and gender equality.

In this context, UNESCO, UNEP, WHO, OHCHR, the Permanent Mission of Austria to Geneva, the Permanent Mission of Chile to Geneva, and the Geneva Press Club, will organize a WPF2024 event on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May from 15:00-18:00 in the Palais des Nations, Room XXIII. The event will focus on science communication in shaping public understanding and policymaking regarding environmental issues, strategies to ensure the dissemination of accurate and reliable information, combating climate disinformation, corporate capture and greenwashing, addressing misinformation and disinformation in environmental reporting, and safeguarding journalists and scientists, particularly women, against the specific challenges and threats they encounter in these fields.

Independent journalists and scientists are crucial actors in helping our societies separate facts from fiction and take informed decisions. They play a crucial role in sustainable development by producing and disseminating reliable scientific information on environmental crises and stemming the floods of disinformation. In the context of the current global environmental crisis, dis-/misinformation campaigns challenge knowledge and scientific research methods. Attacks on the validity of science pose a serious threat to pluralistic and informed public debate.

At the 2021 celebration of World Press Freedom Day, the [Windhoek +30 Declaration](#) was adopted; emphasizing that information is a “public good” and is both a means and an end for sustainable development, and expressing concern at the increasing proliferation of disinformation and hate speech. The declaration also called to reinforce the safety of journalists with a specific focus on women journalists in the face of alarming threats to the safety of journalism and the free exercise of journalism.

Journalists and scientists working on environmental issues face increasing threats and attacks, both on- and offline. These range from physical violence, surveillance, pressure, and intimidation by national and transnational companies that could be affected by their activities, to the imposition of official controls, arbitrary detentions, laws unduly that unduly restrict freedom of expression and access to information, and content moderation to restrict access to information. Furthermore, women journalists and scientists face specific challenges and are disproportionately subject to gender-based violence such as on- and offline harassment, intimidation, stigmatization, and physical and sexual violence.

The [International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development](#) proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly, provides an ideal framework to highlight freedom of expression and the safety of journalists and scientists working on environmental issues as fundamental to sustainable development. To achieve a just and equitable future for all, it is crucial that journalists and scientists

can research and report accurately, timely, and comprehensively on environmental issues, their consequences, and possible solutions, without being attacked, threatened, or otherwise silenced.

Objectives:

- Highlight the fundamental role of an enabling environment for freedom of expression, particularly for journalism and scientific enquiry in the context of environmental issues, emphasizing the need to protect this freedom, and identifying the specific challenges faced by women working in these fields.
- Highlight the critical role of journalists and scientists in producing and disseminating reliable and accurate information to shape public understanding and policymaking on environmental issues crucial for sustainable development, while also exploring strategies to combat disinformation on these issues.
- Promote the role of journalists in holding governments and corporations accountable for their actions, advocating for the protection of the right to a healthy environment, and empowering individuals to participate in environmental decision-making processes.
- Raise awareness about the violence faced by journalists and scientists, particularly women, when contributing to sustainable development and environmental protection, encouraging a gender-responsive perspective that promotes non-sexist journalistic discourse.
- Highlight the role of journalists in promoting environmental justice and the voices of marginalized communities.
- Raise awareness of UNESCO's normative instruments relating to journalists and scientists and highlight the importance of ensuring the safety and protection of scientists and journalists in their work.
- Strengthen ties between different actors, such as journalists and media organizations, scientists and scientific organizations, NGOs, governments, and international bodies to work together to promote and protect freedom of expression and the safety of journalists and scientists.

Agenda:

Session title	Objective	Session Time	Format
Introductory Remarks	/	15:00-15:20	Speeches (3min each)
Combatting Climate disinformation	Acknowledge the importance of reliable and accurate environmental information for sustainable development and discuss how to combat disinformation on environmental issues	15:20-16:25	Panel 1 (30min)
			Q&A (30min)
			Concluding Remarks (5 min)
Break	/	16:25-16:30	/

Protecting environmental journalists and scientists	Create awareness about the violence journalists and scientists face while pursuing sustainable development and discuss how to ensure their safety	16:30-17:40	Panel (30min)
			Q&A (30min)
			Concluding Remarks (5 min)
Concluding remarks	Summarize the discussion, highlighting key points/actions moving forward	17:40-17:50	/