



**Media Release**

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**Fighting Climate Change Needs Independent Reporting and Well-Informed Media**  
*Global Forum for Media Development Calls on Governments to Provide More Media Support*

As the United Nations launched a major new report on climate change today, member organisations of the Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD) focussed on the key role of the media in informing and engaging the public on this urgent global issue. From bringing developing country journalists to Bali to cover the UN forum on climate change next month, to training Southeast Asian journalists in reporting on climate change, GFMD members are enabling local reporters to stimulate public dialogue in in developing countries around the world.

The Global Forum for Media Development, an umbrella group of 500 NGOs which are working to develop the skills and capacity of local media in 97 countries around the world called on governments, intergovernmental institutions and donors to pay more attention to the role of media in informing the public and stimulating discussion about climate change.

“ In order for developing countries to openly debate the options available to them in addressing climate change, we need free, independent and pluralistic media systems that can monitor government decisions and that provide a platform for citizens to be heard on the issue,” said GFMD director Bettina Peters.

“While communication campaigns on climate change funded by foreign donors can provide important information on a short-term basis, they are no substitute for an indigenous media environment in which journalists and media professionals can promote open debate and hold the government to account.”

The GFMD called on governments and donors to go beyond seeing media as a communications tool and to make media development an integral part of their strategies to combat climate change.

Media development NGOs are well aware of the short-comings within media to report on climate change and many members of the GFMD are engaged in projects and initiatives to improve the knowledge of journalists and to enhance quality of coverage.

For instance, in 2006 Panos conducted a survey in several developing countries and found that there was little knowledge among journalists and that climate change was low on editors' story sheets. They launched a programme to redress these short-comings. Another example is the South-East Asia Press Alliance (SEAPA), which conducts journalism training courses on the issue and provides local journalists covering climate change with a wider audience by publishing their stories on SEAPA's web-site. While the threat of global warming has only become more urgent, developing country journalists are still drastically under-represented at the international summit meetings that are pivotal in determining the world's response to this issue. The Earth Journalism Network (EJN) is bringing developing country journalists to Bali in December 2007, when crucial talks will commence on what agreement should follow the Kyoto Protocol.

There are many more examples of GFMD members working to improve coverage and knowledge of climate change, but the GFMD stated that there still is not enough support for media assistance NGOs to run programmes that will improve media performance and that will create the conditions in which local media can produce relevant, accurate and challenging reporting on climate change.

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