National Media Policy, Sri Lanka

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National Media Policy, Sri Lanka

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Vision

Sri Lanka's media become pluralistic, trustworthy and accountable in fostering democracy, equitable development and social justice.

Mission

The mission of the National Media Policy is to create an enabling environment in which media organisations, journalists and other media content creators can enhance professionalism and serve the public interest within a safe and accountable framework.

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1. Policy name

This policy shall be known as the National Media Policy of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

2. Effective Date

The National Media Policy will become effective on the day the Cabinet of Ministers approves it. The target effective date is [to be added later].

The policy is envisaged to be valid for a period of 10 years, with reviews every three (3) years for suitable updates.

3. Introduction

3.1 Background

A free, pluralistic and independent media is a cornerstone of democratic societies. An accountable and robust media is vital for the pursuit of human freedoms, democratic governance, equitable development and social justice.

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An independent, free and pluralistic media are essential for good governance because they can ensure transparency, accountability and the rule of law; promote participation in public and political discourse; and contribute to the fight against poverty.

Media freedom is the ability of journalists to report freely on matters of public interest. The right to freedom of expression and the right to information provide the basis for media freedom.

Both these rights are guaranteed by the Constitution of Sri Lanka as follows:
Article 14 (1) (a) covers the freedom of speech and expression including publication
Article 14 A covers the rights of access to information

These two fundamental rights are also enshrined in the international human rights treaties and instruments that Sri Lanka has acceded to.

At the same time, Article 15 (2) of the Constitution has defined certain limits to the right to freedom of expression in the interests of racial and religious harmony, or in relation to parliamentary privilege, contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence. This highlights the need to exercise freedom of expression with adequate social responsibility.

Freedom of expression and access to information contribute to the wider development objective of empowering citizens. Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social and political process that helps citizens to have greater control over their own lives.

3.2 Need for a National Media Policy

A National Media Policy serves as the high-level framework for balancing the fundamental right to freedom of expression, which includes media freedom, with the need for media's responsibility, accountability and the protection of the public interest.

A well-designed media policy can also promote media pluralism, ensuring a diversity of voices and perspectives across the media landscape. Media pluralism and diversity are essential for a healthy democracy, as it allows media audiences to access a broad range of information and opinions.

The absence of a national media policy in Sri Lanka has constrained the media sector's growth and evolution, and held back the media industry's ability to adapt to changes in technology, demography and the market. It has also become a limiting factor in achieving greater professionalism in all aspects of media- ranging from ethical journalism and quality entertainment content to socially responsible advertising.

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3.3 Purpose and context

A National Media Policy can promote the freedom of expression in two ways.

- Firstly, the Media Policy can demarcate the legal safeguards necessary for an independent and pluralistic media to function well, highlighting the obligations of the state and other sections of society to recognise the rights of journalists to pursue their profession in the public interest.

- Secondly, the Media Policy can clarify the obligations of media professionals and their organisations to adhere to regulatory requirements and ethical standards.

The National Media Policy is formulated with a whole-of-society approach. This is because the media is inherently a multistakeholder endeavour where the State, private sector, professionals, academics and communities are all integrally involved. As a result, the National Media Policy is framed not merely as a policy for the state but for all other stakeholders.

While recognising that the State plays multiple key roles in the media sector as a media owner, media regulator and media advertiser, this National Media Policy takes into account the media related rights and responsibilities of other stakeholders including private owners of media, media advertisers, media educators and researchers, online content creators and media audiences.

3.4 Rationale

While the Constitution has provided the overarching framework within which all citizens, including media practitioners, can exercise their fundamental rights to freedom of expression and freedom of information, there is currently a lack of coherence - and even contradictions - between Constitutional guarantees and some legal and regulatory provisions.

This is due to Sri Lanka's modem-day media and communications services having evolved for nearly two centuries driven by various socio-political developments, technological advancements, demographic transitions and market forces. During much of this period, governments have responded to such unplanned growth or specific situations with a variety of laws, regulations or guidelines on an ad hoc basis, without having an overarching policy framework.

Some laws dating back to the colonial period or the early years after independence are inadequate or irrelevant to meet twenty-first century realities of media content generation, media consumption and media regulation. Such laws can stifle innovation and resilience in the media sector.

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Hence the rationale of the National Media Policy is to envision the policy framework for a pluralistic, robust and accountable media sector in Sri Lanka. Once the policy framework is in place, it would enable the review and revision of relevant laws and regulations to be consistent with the principles and statements contained herein.

4. Policy Objectives

Policy objectives are the broad outcomes that policymakers wish to achieve. The National Media Policy sets out the following policy objectives which are grouped into eight clusters.

Objective 1:
Safeguarding and promoting the **right to freedom of expression,** and the **right of access to information,** both of which are guaranteed in the Constitution of Sri Lanka, and enshrined in the international human rights treaties that Sri Lanka has acceded to.

Objective 2:
Nurturing **independent journalism** that stands for the public interest over any partisan or factional interests, and defending the **editorial independence** of journalists while supporting them to become ethical, responsible and accountable.

Objective 3:
Promoting **media pluralism** and **media diversity** both of which are critical for evolving an independent and robust media ecosystem that supports a multitude of media outlets, opinions and content, as well as more diverse newsrooms.

Objective 4:
Creating a **safe working environment** for journalists, other media workers and online content creators to pursue professional activities without any form of physical, sexual, psycho-social, legal or online harassment.

Objective 5:
Promoting **better working conditions** for all journalists and other media personnel working in media institutions, those reporting from the ground level ('provincial journalists') and regular freelancers, to ensure their **workers' rights.**

Objective 6:
Promoting better **gender equality** and **gender sensitivity** within media organisations, thereby creating more conducive working environments for all media professionals.

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Objective 7:
Foster a multi-stakeholder approach to **media governance** in Sri Lanka, as a collective and collaborative endeavour where the state, media industry, media professionals, media educators and civil society work together on policies, laws and regulations for the sector.

Objective 8:
Provide policy guidance for **reviewing and reforming existing laws and regulations** relating to the freedom of expression and mass media, and also providing a coherent framework for future legislative and regulatory activities concerning these areas.

Objective 9:
Optimally managing the **electromagnetic spectrum,** a public property, by streamlining and standardising the processes of broadcast licensing and frequency allocation.

Objective 10:
Ensuring greater **transparency in media ownership** to prevent de facto media monopolies from emerging or consolidating in any sub-sector or geographical area, and regulating how foreign individuals or entities may co-own media companies in Sri Lanka.

Objective 11:
Safeguard the **intellectual property rights** of journalists and media houses, and also nurturing a media culture respects where practitioners respect the intellectual property of others.

Objective 12:
Exploring new and innovative ways of **funding public interest media content** for the benefit of both state- and privately-owned media, as well as those who create online content.

Objective 13:
Promoting the **rights of media audiences** to receive trustworthy journalism and quality entertainment, as well as to have proper grievance mechanisms for public complaints about media content and conduct.

Objective 14:
Promoting **media and information literacy,** including digital literacy, to strengthen the capacity of media audiences to critically consume media content.

Objective 15:
Forging university-industry link programmes to narrow the gap between university-based **media and journalism education,** and the media industry's practical needs while also strengthening the capacity of journalists to enhance their professionalism.

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Objective 16:
Recognising **journalism as a profession** in Sri Lanka through a professional body, and to afford recognition to the work experience of journalists and other media workers by creating a national benchmarking system.

5. Policy Principles

The policy principles below are based on fundamental and universal values such as accountability, dignity, dialogue, equity, freedom, inclusiveness, openness, security, self-determination, reward and responsibility. These are part of common democratic values, which have been considered alongside the modem realities in media content creation, dissemination and consumption.

Policy Principle	Corresponds with Policy Statement/s
Principle 1: Freedom of expression is a right for all citizens, and includes freedom of speech, media freedom, right to reply, equitable access to means of communication, the right to know (also known as freedom of information), and access to opposing views.	AandB
Principle 2: Journalism plays a critical role in promoting a healthy civic sphere by providing citizens with trusted information they need to participate in a free and open society and acts as an independent watchdog.	C
Principle 3: Media's editorial independence is an essential condition where journalists and newsrooms can carry out their work without political and commercial pressures, and where journalism is driven by the public interest and journalistic ethics.	D
Principle 4: Media pluralism is essential for a healthy democracy as it ensures that no single entity or viewpoint dominates the media narrative, allowing for a more informed and balanced public discourse.	E
Principle 5: When journalists are threatened with harassment, imprisonment, violence or death for simply for doing their jobs in the public interest, they need to be protected physical, legally and institutionally.	F

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Principle 6: Everyone in the media sector has the right to decent wages and fair working conditions, and to work without facing any physical, sexual, psycho-social or verbal harassment or any discrimination.	G
Principle 7: Media's own accountability and social responsibility requires adherence to media ethics, which includes institutional mechanisms for resolving public complaints about media content.	H
Principle 8: Media's independence is best ensured through a co-regulatory mechanism which is enabled by a law and implemented through an inclusive governance model involving multiple stakeholders including the State, private sector, civil society, media profession and academia.	I
Principle 9: The media sector's regulatory framework needs to be consistent with international human rights standards and achieve a healthy balance between the media's independence and accountability.	**K**
Principle 10: The issues of media diversity, variety and pluralism are primarily addressed through policies that require full transparency in media ownership and by ensuring fair market competition.	L
Principle 11: Media entrepreneurship is best supported by the State through appropriate fiscal policies, removing barriers that inhibit media innovation, as by ensuring a level playing field for all.	M
Principle 12: Journalism in the public interest needs public support to survive. This could be accomplished by sourcing additional funds from outside the media industry and disbursing it in fair and equitable ways.	N
Principle 13: Strengthening public trust in the media is vital for future survival of the media, and it requires ethical journalism, accountable media organisations and greater professionalism.	0
Principle 14: The electro-magnetic spectrum is public property and a finite resource whose use for telecommunications, broadcasting, emergency communications and other purposes needs to be optimally and transparently managed.	p
Principle 15: The media industry needs better protection of its intellectual property rights, and media practitioners need to better respect the intellectual property of others.	Q

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Principle 16: Protecting the rights of media audiences is crucial for ensurmg a fair, informed and responsible media environment.	R
Principle 17: Media and information literacy, including digital literacy, are essential life skills for all citizens to enable them to critically consume media content and to responsibly create user-generated content.	S
Principle 18: Media education and training contribute to greater media professionalism, and need revamping to meet modem media realities.	T
Principle 19: Engaging global technology companies operating major internet platforms is necessary for monitoring and mitigating harmful content, and for more equitable sharing of revenue from monetised content.	u
Principle 20: Artificial intelligence (AI) developments in the media sector raise new ethical challenges that need careful consideration and appropriate policy responses.	V

6. Policy Statements

A. **Promoting freedom of expression:** The fundamental right to freedom of expression entails the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media, any format and across all frontiers. This is a right of every individual, and media freedom protects this right in relation to those who seek, receive and impart information for the purposes of journalism. Regulation of expression in print media, broadcast media and online should enhance rather than unduly restrict abilities of citizens to receive and impart information and ideas, and to take part in debate.

B. **Enabling maximum possible expression:** Freedom of expression is applicable not only to information or ideas that are favourably received or regarded, but also to those that may offend, shock or disturb. Significantly, it includes the right to dissent. Democratic societies are required to create safeguards and conducive conditions for the maximum range of free expression, through the media and other forums. Restrictions on the freedom of expression need to be narrow, specific, reasonable, and able to satisfy an independent judicial body.

C. **Recognising journalism as a public good:** The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how trustworthy and responsible journalism can be a life-saving endeavour. Free, pluralistic, and independent journalism is a key engine that contributes to "information as a public good" through the supply of trustworthy news and informed analysis. This leads to the recognition of

journalism itself as a public good. When technological advances and market forces threaten the economic viability of independent journalism, policy level actions are needed to ensure that journalism can continue to function as a public good. This includes the raising of public and philanthropic funding for news media operations and content, especially for investigative journalism (as long as the sources of funding are fully disclosed by recipient media organisations).

D. Safeguarding editorial independence: Editorially independent media allows citizens to approach the news and information with an open mind and not just a desire that the news reinforce their existing opinions. Editorial independence means content decisions are made by journalists or broadcasters based on professional criteria and the public's right to know, without interference from the media's owners, business managers, advertisers, government officials or advocacy groups. Journalists' right to protect their sources is an integral part of editorial independence, which needs to be respected and safeguarded.

E. Promoting media pluralism: Media pluralism exists when a free and democratic public opinion-forming process is enabled by a diversity of media providers (external media pluralism), or a diversity of opinion-forming media content within a medium (internal media pluralism), or both. The media industry and profession should endorse the concept of media pluralism, and commit to it at editorial, personnel and management levels. An integral part of media pluralism is ensuring that the interests and views of marginalised groups in society are accommodated in the media content.

F. Ensuring safety of journalists and media workers: When journalists and their media organisations come under threats and attacks for their work in the public interest, society is duty bound to ensure their safety. The government, media companies, journalists' associations, civil society organisations and other stakeholders need to cooperate to create a safe environment for journalists and other media workers to work free from physical, sexual, psycho-social, legal or online harassment. Law enforcement and judicial processes need to be strengthened to end impunity for perpetrators of all forms of violence against journalists and other media workers.

G. Creating conducive working conditions: Journalists and other media workers, engaged formally or informally and at either operational office level or in the field, need better working conditions. These include the security of employment; appropriate wages; access to other statutorily granted benefits; insurance cover; and workers' rights as provided by labour regulations in the country. At the same time, all those working in the media sector have a right to work in environments that are completely devoid of physical, sexual, psycho-social or verbal harassment as well as any form of discrimination. There should also be a suitable grievance mechanism for journalists who experience problems at the workplace.

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H. Ensuring media's responsibility and accountability: While the media holds all sections of society accountable, it has an obligation to ensure its own accountability and responsibility. This includes the media aspiring to achieve higher professional standards, adhering to media ethics and ensuring individual journalists have editorial independence to uphold the public interest. Consistent adherence to a declared code of media ethics (or a code of conduct) can meet the media's accountability and responsibility obligations to a considerable extent (Annex lists codes of media ethics in Sri Lanka). At the same time, full accountability requires an institutional mechanism for receiving and resolving public complaints concerning specific content in print, broadcast and online media.

I. Streamlining media sector governance: The media sector needs a governance arrangement that holds it fully accountable while recognising and nurturing journalists' rights and media's independence. Considering the hazards of state regulation and weaknesses in self-regulation, a third option known as the co-regulation mode is favoured. Co-regulation is a hybrid of state regulation and self-regulation which is enabled by a law and implemented through a more inclusive governance model that involves a multistakeholder approach.

J. Promoting electoral integrity: Media can play a major role in relation to elections by: providing information on the election process and candidates; reporting on the speeches and actions of candidates; critiquing political party positions; creating spaces where voters engage in public discussion of issues and choices; and holding election officials accountable for conducting free and fair elections. To perform these roles well, both legacy media and online media, including social media platforms, need to abide by the country's election laws and also adhere to guidelines on media and communication activities issued by the election administrator. Such guidelines should govern the conduct of state-owned media, privately owned media organisations and global social media platforms from the time an election is declared until all results are officially announced. Election laws and media guidelines, for their part, need to capture the realities of convergent media and challenges in law enforcement across many providers of information and opinion located in multiple jurisdictions.

K. Reviewing laws and regulations relevant to media: The multitude of media laws and regulations that have accumulated for around 150 years are unable to meet the challenges of modem media and communication realities. Existing laws also contain significant regulatory gaps. There is an urgent need for reviewing all laws and regulations related to media and communications, with a view to repealing obsolete laws, updating others, and rationalising the

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overall regulatory framework to be consistent with international human rights standards.[1] Such streamlining would minimise *ad hoc* legislative action in the future.

L. **Transparency in media ownership:** Media's ownership - whether it is a sole proprietor, corporation, state or any other entity- is inextricably linked to its editorial conduct. Given how much media can influence public opinion, close attention must be paid to who owns the media and how much they control the editorial positions taken by their media outlets. When media ownership is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals or companies, private interests can dominate over the public interest that all media - irrespective of their ownership - is expected to serve. Democracies need to monitor trends in media ownership and take preventive action against undue concentration in the hands of a few owners. A first step in that process is to make it mandatory for media ownership details to be open, transparent and proactively disclosed to the public (and not only to the company regulator). Transparency does not restrict media ownership, but makes it visible so that the public can make Informed choices about how to respond to the content provided. Other factors that need regulatory attention include the cross-ownership of media (i.e. when one company or group owns print, radio, TV and online media outlets in the same market), and on what basis foreign individuals or companies may co-own media companies in Sri Lanka.

M. **Creating an enabling environment for media entrepreneurship:** The proliferation of smartphones and the rise in internet use have created new opportunities. Legacy media can innovate new products and experiment with new ways of engaging audiences. These conditions also enable a new breed of media entrepreneurs to create specialised or customised content for niche markets locally and globally. Media process outsourcing (MPO), a specialised sub-sector of the global business process outsourcing (BPO) industry, holds further business opportunities: it entails providing a range of creative services (including animation, music composition and translations) remotely to overseas media and entertainment companies. The State can support such market driven processes by lowering various administrative, fiscal and legal barriers that inhibit media innovation and entrepreneurship. The state can also ensure a level playing field for all media entities to compete in a fair manner.

N. **Expanding funding for independent media:** Historically the media industry has generated income from advertising, sponsorships and subscriptions. These revenue streams have been disrupted and diminished by the rise of online advertising and the migration of audiences to social media content. Many legacy media organisations are facing unprecedented difficulties in financing the production of good journalism and quality entertainment. The challenge is to secure additional funds from outside the media industry and to disburse it in fair and equitable

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[1] A starting point would be the 1996 Report of the Expert Committee to Advise on the Reform of Laws Affecting Media Freedom and Freedom of Expression (known as 'the R KW Goonesekere Committee Report').

ways that do not compromise the media's editorial independence. Such funds may come from the public - for example as government grants, mandatory licence fees from households or lottery funds - or from philanthropic sources. There are also some types of public interest media content that are important but cannot be supported by market forces alone that justify external funding. The media industry and media professionals should explore new and innovative ways of raising external funding (such as online crowdfunding) while safeguarding media's editorial independence.

O. **Strengthening public trust in the media:** Media's lack of accountability and responsibility erodes the public trust in media content and media institutions, which, in turn, undermines the media's ability to perform its democratic functions. Strengthening public trust is a gradual and collective task which requires a combination of ethical journalism, accountable and responsible media organisations, greater professionalism among practitioners, and a framework for media co-regulation.

P. **Optimising the use of electro-magnetic spectrum, a public property:** It is universally recognised that the airwaves or frequencies in the electro-magnetic spectrum are a public property. The spectrum is a finite resource whose use for telecommunications, broadcasting, emergency communications and other purposes needs to be optimally managed by a public authority on behalf of the public. Even though the adoption of digital broadcasting standards will increase the number of radio and television channels feasible within the spectrum, it will not create an infinite supply of frequencies. It is therefore necessary for the State, as the custodian of the spectrum, to place certain legal obligations on broadcasters who use this public resource and to ensure a fair distribution of access to the spectrum. Any spectrum regulatory mechanism has to prioritise the public interest over any other interests.

Q. **Respecting intellectual property:** Intellectual property (IP) is a generic term that refers to intangible objects, such as literary works, artistic productions, scientific discoveries, and plans for inventions and designs, which acquire their value primarily from creative efforts. Issues surrounding intellectual property in the media are complex and often contentious. The situation is further complicated by the ease with which content is generated and disseminated online. Overall, media professionals and their media organisations have a right to expect their content to be safeguarded by IP laws of the country. At the same time, there needs to be a media culture that respects the IP rights of other content creators whether they are legacy media practitioners, bloggers or social media users.

R. **Protecting the rights of media audiences:** Media audiences have their legal and moral rights as both citizens and consumers. Protecting the rights of media audiences is crucial for ensuring a fair, informed and responsible media environment. Among other things, audiences have a right to receive accurate, balanced and contextualised news without manipulation or

fabrication. They also have a right to pluralistic media content that reflects diversity in their society. With the rise of user-generated content on online platforms, ensuring responsible content moderation has become crucial Addressing these and other issues requires collaboration between media organisations, regulatory bodies, technology companies and civil society to develop and enforce ethical standards that prioritize the rights and well-being of media audiences.

S. **Promoting media and information literacy, including digital literacy:** Media and information literacy (MIL) is about equipping citizens with the competencies and skills to engage effectively and responsibly with media and information systems. It empowers people to think critically about information and other media content when they access legacy media or use online tools. This enables them to become active and critical citizens who can participate in civic life and democracy. Increasing use of the internet and digital tools does not, by itself, lead to rise in MIL. It requires the state, civil society and academia to identify needs and respond with skills building across the age groups and in all sections of society.

T. **Realigning media education and training:** For enhancing professionalism in the media sector, its practitioners need a better understanding of key concepts, theories and practices. A major constraint in this regard is the gap between university-based media studies or journalism courses, and the media industry's practical needs. To reduce this gap, journalism and mass media education courses should be reviewed and updated so they meet the industry needs and suit the changing media consumption patterns. Setting up a chartered institute of media professionals can help in the benchmarking of journalists of industry experience, and in setting standards for media training centres across the country.

U. **Engagement with global technology platforms:** In recent years, almost all legacy media organisations have extended their operations online through their own websites as well as using global social media platforms for engaging audiences. Individual media companies are not able to influence the user terms and conditions of search engines or social media platforms, which are framed in favour of global technology companies. A national media policy does not have jurisdictional purview over global technology companies either. At the same time engaging global technology companies in an on-going dialogue is necessary, for example through their regional industry alliances, in matters such as monitoring and mitigating harmful content, and in sharing revenue from monetised content. Such on-going engagement with the global technology companies can be vital in times of emergencies like disasters, as well as during election periods.

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V. **Harnessing benefits from AI and related technologies:** Mass media is significantly impacted by artificial intelligence (AI) in various ways, transforming the industry's present and future. AI technologies are increasingly being used in content creation, curation and distribution. Automated algorithms help personalise content recommendations online, enhancing user experience and engagement. News organisations use AI for data analysis, enabling faster and more efficient journalism. AI also plays a role in media monetisation through targeted advertising. However, concerns arise regarding the potential for algorithmic biases, disinformation and hate speech spread through AI-generated content, and the impact on traditional journalism. As AI continues to evolve, its influence on mass media is likely to grow, warranting ethical considerations and regulatory frameworks to ensure responsible and unbiased media practices.

7. Applicability and Scope

The scope of the National Media Policy, i.e. the extent to which it applies, is defined as follows:

- *In conceptual terms,* the media policy deals with the news media, educational media, entertainment media, as well as other communications activities including inter-personal communications in social media, reflecting the current media environment where these are consumed through convergent devices and therefore require joint consideration.

- *In terms of the overall sector,* the media policy encompasses the interests of the media industry (media owners and managers); media professionals Gournalists and all other media workers); media audiences; media educators and trainers; as well as media regulators.

- *In terms of media dissemination modes,* the media policy covers the print media (newspapers and magazines); broadcast media (radio and television); and online media (news websites, opinion websites, as well as social media platforms).

- *In terms of media content diversity,* the media policy covers news reporting, current affairs analysis, features, opinions, investigative journalism, sports coverage, photojournalism, documentary filmmaking and entertainment content. It also covers advertising and public relations to the extent their products are disseminated through the print, broadcast or online media.

- *In terms of practitioners,* the media policy covers journalists reporting news and current affairs using text, audio, video or multimedia formats; opinion writers and columnists; media managers; and content creators/curators/ editors concerned with news, educational, sports or entertainment content online.

- *In terms of content origin,* the media policy primarily concerns with media content produced by media organisations and content creators based in Sri Lanka (or aimed primarily at Sri Lankan audiences). However, it recognises that media audiences in Sri Lanka regularly access content produced outside their island, for example through satellite television broadcasts, foreign magazines, and online.

Where the cinema industry and the performing arts of music, drama, puppetry and comedy are concerned, the media policy applies only when their content is disseminated through broadcast or online outlets.

8. Policy Implementation

8.1 Implementation Strategies

The National Media Policy is envisaged to cover a 10-year period, from 2024 to 2033. It is to be reviewed every three (3) years for suitable updates.

Implementing the National Media Policy requires a systematic and multi-stakeholder approach. The implementation strategies will be prepared shortly after the formal adoption of the National Media Policy.

8.2 Responsibility and Authority

The Ministry of Mass Media will bear the responsibility of coordinating the implementation process with the participation of all other relevant stakeholders from state agencies, media industry, media professionals, media educators, media researchers, civil society organisations, global technology companies and others.

8.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

The National Media Policy's implementation will require adequate monitoring and evaluation, for which a plan is to be developed by the Ministry of Mass Media.

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9. Conclusion

Sri Lanka's media and communications landscapes will continue to experience rapid change during the decade envisaged for the National Media Policy's implementation. While technology, demographic transitions and market forces remain key drivers of change, the sector may also be disrupted by unpredictable events such as global pandemics and economic crises.

To be robust and resilient, all media entities - irrespective of their content type and delivery modes - will need to better engage their audiences, regain their trust and innovate to stay relevant.

It is hoped that the National Media Policy and its future implementation strategies can provide the vision and guidance for the media sector's stakeholders to forge their way forward in challenging times.

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Annex

Code of Media Ethics in Sri Lanka

Media ethics refers to the principles, values, and standards that guide the behaviour of individuals and organisations working in the media industry. These ethical guidelines are designed to ensure responsible and fair conduct in the gathering, reporting, and dissemination of news and information. Media ethics encompass a wide range of considerations, including accuracy, fairness, impartiality, accountability, transparency, and sensitivity to diverse perspectives. Adherence to media ethics is essential for maintaining the credibility and trustworthiness of media institutions in the eyes of the public.

There are more than 400 code of media ethics in an international database maintained by the Accountable Journalism initiative. These have been adopted an individual media outlet; sector of a country's media industry; a media union or association of journalists; or by statutory press councils. The database is at: https://accountablejournalism.org/ethics-codes

Sri Lanka does not have a code of media ethics that covers the entirety of legacy media. Only the print media sector has two codes of ethics, as follows:

• **Code of Ethics for (print) journalists** issued under Section 30 (i) (a) of the Sri Lanka Press Council Law No 5 of 1973, approved by Parliament and gazetted on 14 October 1981. This is the framework used by the Sri Lanka Press Council to decide on complaints against newspapers. https://slpc.lk/media/attachments/2019/10/18/1981-10-14-english.pdf

• **Code of Professional Practice (Code of Ethics)** of The Editors' Guild of Sri Lanka adopted by the Press Complaints Commission of Sri Lanka (PCCSL) in 2004 (and revised on several occasions since). This is used as the framework for hearing complaints against newspapers received by the PCCSL, a voluntary body whose rulings are non-binding. http://www.pccsl.lk/code-of-professional-practice-code-of-ethics-of-the-editors-guild-of-sri-lanka-adopted-by-the-press-complaints-commission-of-sri-lanka/

Sri Lanka's radio and TV broadcasting sector does not have an industry-wide code of ethics. Historically Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) and Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation (SLRC) had developed their own inhouse codes to guide programme production and acceptable advertising, but these are no longer widely used. Privately owned broadcasters have not published any codes of ethics even though some claim they have internal codes.

The Professional Web Journalists Association (PWJA) adopted a Code of Ethics for online professional journalists in 2018. It is meant for Sri Lankan websites that cover news and current affairs, only a handful of news websites have adopted this as their framework. http://www.meepura.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Web-Media.pdf

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Annex

Glossary of Key Terms

Legacy Media

Legacy media refers to traditional forms of media that existed before the internet, i.e. newspapers, magazines, radio and television. They are considered "legacy" because they have been around for a long time and have been the primary sources of news, information and entertainment for many decades. By now, most legacy media have extended online.

Media Diversity

Diversity in media refers to the extent to which the media accurately reflects the variety of cultural, social and political perspectives on issues and opinions of those populations in editorial content. Factual representation and equal treatment of all members of society is particularly important in news and current affair programmes so as to avoid stereotypes, misunderstandings and conflicts, and fairly portray human diversity. Diversity in media also refers to the array of programmes and genres in media, such as reporting, documentaries, talk shows, vox-pops, etc., as they open up a multitude of spaces for democratic participation on an infinity of subjects. *[Source: World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development: Global Report 2021-22]*

Media Pluralism

Media pluralism relates to the choice and diversity, and to issues such as concentration, centralization, and monopolization of media-related institutions. Media pluralism can be viewed both as an aspect of production or supply, and from the perspective of news consumers. The content of news is relevant to the understanding of pluralism. For true pluralism, news sources must be accessible and meet the needs and interests of a diverse audience, including women, youth, rural communities, and linguistic and cultural minorities. Pluralism further encompasses consideration of user-generated content and of media consumption in a communications environment increasingly shaped by algorithms. Pluralism implies the existence of a vibrant public space where a plurality of voices can inform public dialogue and debate. *[Source: World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development: Global Report 2021-22]*

Media Professional

"Media professionals" includes following categories: Writers, Content Developers, Content Editors, Anchors and Presenters, Broadcasters, Journalists, Editors, Publishers, Owners, Managers, Media Educators and Researchers, Media Technical personnel.
[Source: Draft Bill for setting up a Chartered Institute of Media Professionals uses this definition in final report of expert committee, Sep 2021]

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Multistakeholder Approach

Multi-stakeholder approach means the stakeholders who are working together to find a collective solution for certain problems, including governments, private sector entities, local authorities, non-governmental and civil society organisations and international institutions.

[Source: htt:ps://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/multi-stakeholders]

Public interest

The public interest means anything that is relevant to the lives and well-being of all of us, to society and our communities. It concerns the "common good", meaning matters that affect our health, livelihoods, quality of life, security, and our governance. News journalism is reporting matters of societal relevance. A journalist with a brief to report news should therefore apply a public interest test before deciding whether to cover a story.

[Source: https://mediahelpingmedia.org/basics/applying-the-public-interest-test-to-jownalism/]