

PRESS RELEASE

Dakar hosted a regional workshop on promotion and conduct of peaceful electoral processes in West Africa

Dakar, 01 October 2015 – The United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) organized from 29 to 30 September 2015, in Dakar, a regional workshop on « the role of media in the promotion and the conduct of peaceful electoral processes in West Africa. »

The workshop aimed at reinforcing the capacities of media managers and professionals so that they avoid spreading false information that could disturb public order and undermine democratic progress when carrying on their freedom of expression.

The meeting gathered about twenty French-speaking media managers from Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo-Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo.

"The elections often lead to turmoil, conflict and violence. All those involved in electoral processes, including the media, have an important role to play in preserving peace and security, "said Mr. Moudjib Djinadou, UNOWA Political Affairs Director, at the opening ceremony on 29 September 2015. And more especially as, between 2015 and 2017, several countries in the region will hold elections.

Mr. Mbagnick Ndiaye, Minister la Culture and Communication of Senegal, who co-chaired the opening ceremony of the workshop, with his counterpart from Benin, Paul Hounkpe, noted that "the election period is very sensitive. This is a period where information professionals, more than at any other time must exercise great responsibility."

At the end of the workshop, participants highlighted the need to strengthen training for journalists, particularly as regards the mastery of the laws and regulations governing elections in the region; the importance of implementing mechanisms that ensure financial independence and material of media companies, as well as enhancing the safety of journalists during elections. The participants expressed the wish that UNOWA and partners multiply such meetings that allow journalists of diverse backgrounds and specialties to meet and share experiences.

They also said that they want to see more involvement of United Nations in electoral processes, to prevent and / or assist in peaceful resolution of electoral disputes. This could avoid violence and maintain peace and stability in countries in the region.

The Dakar workshop was organized by the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) in partnership with the High Commissioner for Human Rights - West Africa Office (OHCHR -BAO), UNESCO regional Office in Dakar , the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) in Dakar with the technical support of the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF). Academics, media specialists and experts of the region and from international institutions conducted and facilitated the discussions.

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