

**3 May 2021 Presentation at Makerere University  
by Kjersti Lindøe, First Secretary/Deputy Head of Cooperation,  
Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kampala in Uganda**

- Good morning; Dean, Principal, Vice Chancellor, journalists and students, ladies and gentlemen present and online I am happy to be with you here to mark the World Press Freedom Day; a day of support for media which are targets for the restraint, or abolition, of press freedom. It is also a day of remembrance for those journalists who lost their lives in the pursuit of a story.
- World Press Freedom Day has its origins in a UNESCO conference in Windhoek in 1991. The event ended on 3 May with the adoption of the landmark Windhoek Declaration for the Development of a Free, Independent and Pluralistic Press. After 30 years, the historic connection made between the freedom to seek, impart and receive information and the public good remains as relevant as it was at the time of its signing
- Free media, safety of journalists and access to reliable information is important not only for each individual, but for the development of a democratic society. Freedom of expression is a prerequisite for uncovering human rights violations and for ensuring that other human rights are being fulfilled, like the right to health, food and education.
- We are worried about the threats to media freedom, the safety of journalists and access to reliable information throughout the world. Today only 9 percent of the world's population enjoy a free press according to Reporters without Borders (2020).
- Norway aims to be in the forefront in promoting freedom of expression and independent media internationally. Our priority areas continue to include independent media, protection of journalists and access to information, as well as gender equality, artistic freedom and freedom of expression for minorities.
- Norway allocates substantial funds annually to implement this important work. We work with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNESCO, as well as international, national and local non-governmental organizations and media houses and universities like Makerere.
- Norway and Uganda have a long-standing relationship within higher education and research. Makerere and the University of Bergen's 30 years jubilee in 2019, is a true testimony of this. The collaborations has over the years expanded to include other universities in both countries, like the University of Oslo and Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet) involved in collaboration and research that I believe will make part of the presentations today.
- Academic collaborations have been established, and joint research projects flourished. Many through Norwegian funded programmes such as NOMA, NUFU and the Quota Scheme, and more recently through the NORHED, EnPe and NORPART programmes.

- Through the years, a significant number of Ugandan students have taken their degrees in Norway. Many have returned to academic positions at Makerere, where they have continuing the collaboration, and building bridges between the two countries. This is also the case, as I understand, for **Dr. William Tayeebwa**, who has been the project leader for the NORHED project **Strengthening Media in Post-Conflict Societies, Uganda, South Sudan, Nepal and Norway**. And through NORHED collaboration, he has played a pivotal role in further strengthening academic collaboration within media and journalism, not only between Uganda and Norway, but also within Uganda, and regionally. And contributed to additional staff at Makerere having the opportunity to do their PhD in Norway.
- Higher education institutions are important actors when it comes to social transformation - challenging common perceptions, systems and power relations in society. Media and journalism play an especially important role for democratization processes, setting the focus on freedom of speech, holding leaders accountable, and amplifying the voices of the typically underrepresented people and groups in society. It is also important to combat fake news and other disinformation. To undertake this transformation, the countries need strong universities that can offer high-quality education, to equip the future media professionals with the skills and mindsets acquired to address the challenges the countries are facing.
- We are pleased to see that the **Norwegian Programme for Capacity Building in Higher Education and Research for Development - NORHED** project has been especially successful. Through the project, you have considerably strengthened the teaching and research capacity of staff in media and journalism studies. You have revised and updated the curriculum and teaching methods, making the study programmes more relevant for worklife and the needs in the media industry. And you have Updated the media lab necessary for up to date media production. And not least, you have been very productive in producing research and new knowledge – some of which will be presented today. And we are very confident that the department is in a solid position to continue to produce high-quality media graduates and research in the years ahead. Wish you a fruitful Annual Media Convention.
- Thank you!