

HAKI NA SHERIA DIALOGUE FORUM

HELD ON 14TH MARCH 2019, NAIROBI - KENYA

This breakfast Dialogue Forum was held at the Intercontinental Hotel on the topic '*Credibility Crises: How the media in Africa and Europe is struggling for acceptance and what to do about it*'



Mr. Plate making his presentation

The guest speaker was Mr. Christoph Plate, the Director of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung's Media Programme for Sub-Sahara Africa that is based in Johannesburg, South Africa. He shared his insights based on his long experience as a media practitioner in Africa and Europe.

He noted that challenges facing the media worldwide are similar and all revolve around economics and ethics, even though the causes and the gravity are slightly different from one region and country to another.

He pointed out that the media has become a big enterprise venture worldwide that is often misused and abused by the investors.

He cited examples of decaying ethical standards in the industry such as the case of *Claas Relotius*. He stated that in recent years, *DER SPIEGEL*, a German weekly news magazine, published about 60 articles by a reporter and editor *Claas Relotius* who later admitted that he either invented stories or distorted facts in several instances. As a result of such unethical behavior media houses and practitioners are losing their reputation and credibility.

In Africa, he observed that 'Scandilization' is big and the media has allowed unbelievable plots to find space in their coverage. For this reason, some journalists have become 'goons for hire' while others simply publish articles without counterchecking the facts and sources.

He observed that consumer behavior is also changing rapidly due to the use of digital media. As a result, most people are not prepared to pay for a good story and the classical publishers who were proud of the content and defended their newspapers are increasingly becoming rare.

With the explosion of the new technological outlets there is a glut of 'fake news' which is a major threat to continued consumption of information by the public because it is no longer easy to tell the truth from lies. Such an environment creates fertile ground for evil to thrive in society since the perpetrators can easily dismiss such reports as a form of 'defence' while the public can easily fall prey by dismissing such reports to the detriment of their own safety and well-being.

In a bid to address some of the challenges facing the media today, Mr. Plate quoted Mr. Dapo Olorunyomi, Editor-In-chief, Nigerian Times who once said: *'we have to clear up many of the problems and we only have this century for clear up, afterwards it will be too late'*.

In this regard, it was pointed out that good and ethical journalism can still be achieved if,

- a. the sector moved out of its comfort zone and have experienced journalists to guide the younger ones. Independence of both the media houses and journalists is also a key aspect, but to achieve this, there has to be better and equitable pay for journalists (local and foreigners), editors and executives. As a way of achieving this goal, media houses themselves need to diversify their revenue streams.
- b. training and education of journalists focuses on the values and ethics of journalism and not fame. Therefore, the privileges of journalism should be protected by the practitioners in order to preserve their profession.
- c. concerted efforts are made by all to rid our societies of vices such as corruption, negative ethnicity, discrimination among others. It will be unrealistic to expect journalists and media houses to act in a different way if the aforementioned vices are widespread and are the norm in the society.

PICTORIAL



Dr. Arne Wulff making his contribution



Mr. Henry Maina of Article 19 making his submission



Participants keenly following the discussions