

The First International Forum on Media and Information Literacy (MIL)

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June 15, 2011 to June 17, 2011

The First International Forum on Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is organized by the Research Group on Mass Communication, Culture and Society; the Laboratory of Discourse, Creativity and Society: Perception and Implications; the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Sais-Fes; and Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco, on June 15-17, 2011, with the collaboration of UNESCO as lead partner, ISESCO, the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) as key partners.

This Forum is the first at the international level to examine both media and information literacy because we believe that in the digital age and convergence of communications, information literacy and media literacy should go hand in hand to achieve full human development, to build up civic societies, and to lay the foundations for world peace and intercultural constructive dialogue. In fact, seeing that media literacy and information literacy are closely intertwined, UNESCO took the lead in blending the two concepts in education curricula to cope with the challenges of inclusive-information and knowledge-based societies. *A Model Media and Information Literacy Curriculum was prepared to this effect. It will be launched by UNESCO in three languages: English, French and Arabic in this Forum.*

Yet, most of the research, strategies and action plans undertaken so far in this field are dominated by Western perspectives which stem from Western contexts and realities. This Forum aims to examine, among others, the state of the art of MIL in developing and emergent countries and to set the stage for MIL from cross-cultural perspectives. In fact, while the North has gone far ahead in media and information literacy, the South is still lagging far behind despite the extensive interaction of young people with media and ICTs in the South as it was demonstrated by the recent uprising in the Arab world. This is one of the key variables of MIL that the Forum intends to tackle. Setting this debate within an international framework gives the Forum more credence. In this regard, UNESCO and the Research Group on Mass Communication, Culture and Society, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco, are also organizing, in cooperation with ISESCO, the *Arab Region Consultation on the Media and Information Literacy Curriculum* in order to adapt it to the needs and specificities of this region. *This first edition of the Forum will also provide a platform for launching the UNESCO/UNAOC MIL and Intercultural Dialogue University Network (UAC-MILID).*

The main axes of the forum include information and communication technologies; access to information and media; information and media competencies; media / information and basic rights and obligations; global media and information systems and their impact on local cultures and public

opinion; approaches to media and information literacy; the power of mass media and the empowering effect of MIL practices; media and information processes, functions and industries; how to differentiate between fact and opinion, and how to detect prejudice, stereotype, defamation, manipulation, misinformation, disinformation and distortion of information for specific purposes; digital literacy; visual literacy; cultural literacy; news literacy; Internet literacy; creative cultural production perspectives of media and information; media and information literacy as platform for intercultural dialogue; electronic media and cyber culture; ICTs as platform for youth social participation; social media and citizen journalism; new trends in journalism and information systems; the watchdog function of the press; media and information, commerce and audiences; media and information, politics, and ideology; media and information governance, culture and ethics; responsibilities of free media and information systems; responsibilities of informed citizenry; ways and means to revive the basic role of libraries, to make informed use of the Internet, to enhance free, independent and responsible media and information systems, and to build up media and information literate societies.

As one of the outcomes, the Forum hopes to adopt a Fez Declaration on MIL and a Plan of Action to promote MIL and encourage international, regional and inter-regional cooperation to this effect. The Forum will provide basis for continual interactions on media and information literacy across borders, cultures, fields of study and professional practice through its bi-annual meetings.

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