

Editors call for targeted relief measures to save media, nation's economy

The Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE) has called on the federal government to urgently mitigate the negative impact of fuel subsidy removal and the exchange rate volatility on the economy. The resolution of the All Nigeria Editors' Conference (ANEC) in Yenagoa, the Bayelsa State Capital, was contained in a communique signed by the NGE President, Eze Anaba and the General Secretary, Dr Iyobosa Uwugiaren. The Guild noted the economic constraints and rising operational costs. It urged the federal government to consider subsidies or tax relief to help media houses cope with the current challenges. The professional body of editors and media executives said that while it recognized the potential long-term benefits of the federal government's reforms, the immediate economic strain on all sectors, especially the media, was becoming unbearable and unhelpful to the economic growth as well as media sustainability and viability. The Guild, therefore, called for targeted relief measures to ease the burden on citizens and businesses alike. On the sustainability of media revenue models, the Guild advocated for innovation in revenue generation beyond traditional advertising. "Media owners are encouraged to invest in quality journalism, embrace digital platforms, and offer premium content to ensure financial sustainability. "Concern over the rise in harassment and violence against journalists was also prominent at the conference. And we called for stricter enforcement of journalist protection laws and urged media houses to provide safety training for their staff, especially those covering sensitive issues", the editors added. Reaffirming the importance of ethical journalism, media proprietors were urged to maintain high standards of professionalism, saying adhering to these standards is essential for building public trust and countering pressures that threaten press freedom. The Guild also urged the federal government to create a media-friendly environment by reviewing policies that affect operational costs, and consider tariff reductions on essential media equipment. According to the NGE, "There was a strong recommendation at the conference that the media proprietors should invest in digital transformation, enhance content delivery, and train staff in digital skills, like data journalism and multimedia production to

adapt to Nigeria's increasingly digital audience. "There was also call for the Guild to encourage greater collaboration among the media organizations, NGOs, and civil society to advocate for press freedom, and emphasized that unity is essential in confronting restrictive laws and policies." The ANEC also discussed the outcome of a conference titled "The Big Tech and Journalism – Building a Sustainable Future for the Global South, which was held last year in Johannesburg.

The conference, which brought together over 70 journalists, news publishers, media organisations, including Nigerian Guild of Editors, scholars, activists, lawyers, and economists from 24 countries discussed solutions to the crisis of the sustainability of journalism and its intersection with the role of major tech platforms. According to the Guild, "The conference culminated in the adoption of Big Tech and Journalism: Principles for Fair Compensation (the Principles). The Principles are intended to be universal, serving as a framework for any country seeking to address media sustainability through competition or regulatory approaches, while enabling adaptation to the unique context." The ANEC, therefore, resolved to use the Principles and hoped that the

Principles will represent an important step forward in addressing Nigerian media sustainability in "the tumultuous era of Big Tech." The ANEC also expressed concern over the gagging of Nigerian press, especially online platforms, with obnoxious laws and resolved to compile all the anti-media laws and forward it to the National Assembly to begin the process for repeal or amendment. The Guild expressed its gratitude to Governor Douye Diri of Bayelsa State, members of the Bayelsa State Executive Council, and traditional rulers for their hospitality and support. Their contributions, according to the Guild, were instrumental in facilitating a successful conference and demonstrated Bayelsa's commitment to fostering national dialogue and media development. The 20th ANEC rounded off with a shared commitment from Nigerian media proprietors, media executives and editors to promote responsible journalism, support economic growth, and defend press freedom and democracy.

