

## STATEMENT ON RFS PRESS FREEDOM INDEX

### **Background**

- The Government of Ghana takes note of the 2022 world press freedom ranking by Reporters Without Borders (RSF).
- It is our understanding that the 2022 report was developed with a new methodology by RSF, which considers the following broad areas;
  - ✓ Legal Framework and Justice System
  - ✓ Technological Censorship and Surveillance
  - ✓ Disinformation and Propaganda
  - ✓ Arbitrary Detentions and Proceedings
  - ✓ Independence and Pluralism
  - ✓ Models and Good Practices
  - ✓ Media Sustainability, and
  - ✓ Violence Against Journalists
- The report was also impacted by unregulated online media spaces that served as conduits for spreading fake news and disinformation, a situation that was exacerbated by social media endorsements.
- The report further indicates that advent of opinion media and propaganda, coupled with ownership of traditional media houses by politicians (30%) partly accounted for this new ranking.

## Methodology and Caution

- It is instructive to note that the new methodology deployed by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) for the 2022 ranking relied primarily on five (5) parameters; these are
  - ✓ Media Landscape
  - ✓ Political Context
  - ✓ Legal Framework
  - ✓ Economic Context, and
  - ✓ Safety of journalists.
- On the matter of comparing the 2022 rankings to the 2021 rankings, the authors caution that “*care should be taken when comparing the 2022 rankings and scores with those from 2021 in light of this new methodology*”
- Some analysts and senior researchers have suggested that the 2022 RFS report on press freedom should rather serve as a baseline for assessing media freedom in subsequent years given the change in methodology.

## Scores and Ranking

- According to the five (5) parameters assessed under the new methodology, Ghana scored appreciably high in the following; Legal Framework (81.42%) and Socio-cultural Context (79.64%)
- Ghana also recorded above average and moderately high scores for Political Context (66.61%) and Safety of Journalists (62.25%).
- The only parameter in which Ghana performed below average was Economic Context (47.22%). This refers to the economic conditions of journalists on one hand and financial sustainability of media houses.

- Ghana's scores under these parameters culminated in an average score of 67.43% and 60<sup>th</sup> position on the new global ranking.

### **Analysis**

- It is important to emphasize that the change in methodology significantly accounted for the drop in ranking for a number of countries including the Netherlands that dropped from 5<sup>th</sup> (2021) to 28<sup>th</sup> (2022) in global ranking. Due to this development, four (4) of the countries (Netherlands, Jamaica, Switzerland and New Zealand) that ranked top ten (10) in 2021 significantly dropped in ranking, slumping out of the top ten (10) in the year under review.
- It is worthy of note that Ghana's dip in ranking was largely influenced by two of the new parameters, namely, the Economic Context and Safety of Journalists where the country scored 47.22% and 62.25% respectively. The country comparatively performed better in guaranteeing safety of journalists (62.25%) juxtaposed to economic factors that influence media work (47.22%) underpinned by poor salaries for journalists and the lack of financial sustainability of some media houses, making a number of them economically less viable.

On the safety of journalists, it is imperative to note that an activity that may feed into the assessment of press freedom includes actions by non-State actors.

- It is also striking that the new report took into consideration the effect of opinion media, propaganda, disinformation and fake news and their adverse impact on press freedom ranking for affected countries. This is as a result of growing political and social tensions leading to information distortions and the publication of false news, particularly across social media platforms.

### **Positive Highlights from the RFS Report**

- Ghana performed creditably well in three (3) of the five (5) parameters under the new methodology, namely, Political Context, Legal Framework and Social Context. Ghana scored 66%, 81% and 79% in that order. It is worthy of note that this rather significant performance amidst a general downgrade is largely due to initiatives such as the passage of the Right to Information Act, the Coordinated Mechanism on Safety of Journalists and the Media Capacity Enhancement Programme.

### **Negative Highlights from the RFS Report**

- Ghana's performance on safety of journalists leaves room for improvement.
- Ghana's performance on Economic Context is very poor and must equally be reserved

### **The Way Forward**

Despite the caution from the publishers of the report that “*care should be taken when comparing the 2022 rankings and scores with those from 2021 in light of this new methodology*” the Government of Ghana in pursuance of its desire to continuously promote press freedom and the safety of journalists, intends to do the under-listed;

- Work in collaboration with the National Media Commission to deepen the execution of the Coordinated Mechanism on the Safety of Journalists.
- Collaborate with stakeholders including Civil Society Organisations in deepening education for State and non-State actors on the safety of journalists
- To address the RFS' concern about the poor economic conditions of most journalists in the country, government continue engagements with media associations including media owners to improve the working and economic conditions of journalists.
- Collaborate with stakeholders in the fight against disinformation and spread of fake news

**Conclusion**

Ghana's democracy is a work in progress. Overall, therefore, government welcomes the RSF report as a baseline reference document against which press freedom in our country may be gauged in the coming years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kojo Oppong Nkrumah', written in a cursive style.

**KOJO OPPONG NKRUMAH, MP  
MINISTER**