

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for gathering today to discuss an issue that lies at the heart of democracy: press freedom. In our interconnected world, the role of a free press is more critical than ever. It serves as a watchdog, holding the powerful accountable and shining a light on injustice.

When journalists are free to report the truth, societies can make informed decisions. They empower citizens with knowledge and foster transparency and integrity in governance. However, we are witnessing increasing threats to press freedom globally--censorship, intimidation, and violence against journalists. These are challenges we must confront together.

Let us stand united in support of a free press. Encourage open dialogue, protect journalists' rights, and ensure media outlets can operate without fear of retribution. By defending press freedom, we defend democracy itself.

Thank you.