



ADVISORY/POSITION STATEMENT

Friday 20th March 2020.

MEDIA COUNCIL OF UGANDA

“for a free and responsible press”

RE: CORONA VIRUS / COVID - 19 SAFETY & PRACTICE ADVISORY TO JOURNALISTS & MEDIA PRACTITIONERS

On Wednesday 18th March 2020 H.E. The President of the Republic of Uganda Gen. Y.K. Museveni addressed the nation on the COVID – 19 Pandemic. In his address H.E the President gave guidance and issued several directives that if adhered to will ensure the safety from the Pandemic for all Ugandans.

In line with the guidelines and directives issued by H.E. The President and cognisant of the operating procedures issued by the Ministry of Health together with consultative information from other stakeholders and sister organisations, the Media Council met on the 19th March 2020 and assessed the perils of the pandemic and in view thereof makes the following recommendations to the media fraternity for safety and practice when covering the pandemic:

1. Calling off live Press conferences.

All national and local governments, departments and agencies as well as private sector organisations are advised to suspend all live coverage of press conferences and / or comply with the Ministry of Health Standard Operation Procedures on containment of COVID – 19 that will be availed, in the event that such press conference is inevitable. This is to avoid congregation of large numbers of persons in one location.

2. Public Communication.

All media houses have a civic responsibility to assist government in the containment of the pandemic. As such Media Houses are requested to engage with government at all levels to receive / facilitate the provision of live feeds and public announcements, especially at community level. The live feeds should be enabled to receive questions and answers from and to the public. This kind of facilitation will minimise the need for crowded engagement and risk of infections therefrom.

3. Protective gear for Journalists and Media practitioners.

All media houses are obliged to provide their personnel with protective gear as they cover the pandemic. These shall include but are not limited to, face masks, gloves and sanitizer liquid.

4. Official content & Designated personnel.

Media houses shall endeavour to receive official content about the pandemic from authorised officers of the Ministry of Health. This will help in countering misinformation. Media houses are also advised to designate personnel covering the pandemic and provide the Government, through the Media Council, a list of the designated personnel who forthwith shall be allowed access to government authorised information centres.

This advisory shall be effective for thirty two days *w.e.f* Friday 20th March 2020 and subject to revision thereafter. We have herewith attached some important tips on how best to responsibly cover this pandemic.

The media Council salutes the efforts of all Ugandans in the fight against this Pandemic. God bless you all & God bless Uganda.

For God & My Country,

Paulo Ekochu
Chairman – Media Council of Uganda.

Copied to:

The Hon. Minister of Health, Ministry of Health.
The Uganda Media Centre



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TIPS ON RESPONSIBLE REPORTING OF THE COVID – 19 PANDEMIC

- ✚ **Avoid sensational language that may create anxiety and elevate fear in the public causing unnecessary panic;**
- ✚ **Avoid stark or gory images that feed into stereotypes;**
- ✚ **Avoid speculation about worst case scenarios;**
- ✚ **Provide readers, viewers and listeners with specifications they can take for safety precautions and treatment;**
- ✚ **Endeavour at all times to obtain proper information from official sources and promptly correct any wrong information published;**
- ✚ **Direct readers, viewers and listeners to official sources of information;**
- ✚ **Know which questions to ask and when about new developments and research;**
- ✚ **Elicit information from more than one genuine expert;**
- ✚ **Always remember that not every rumour deserves coverage;**
- ✚ **And when covering a rumour ensure that you foreground the facts in headline on all platforms;**
- ✚ **Endeavour to make complicated information easy to process by your audience;**
- ✚ **Avoid at all times the use of derogatory language;**
- ✚ **Research on the current questions being asked by your audience and answer them accurately;**
- ✚ **Always include data sources, dates and context in your articles, maps and graphs.**