TRAINING ON UNESCO’S MEDIA DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN THAILAND

25-27 January 2016

Bangkok, City Centre *(location tba)*

I. Background: Media and Political Transition in Thailand

Thailand’s media landscape is one of the most vibrant and diverse in Southeast Asia: with a mix of state, private, public and community media, the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission, a specific body regulating the sector, and several media professional organizations such as the National Press Council and the News Broadcasting Council. At the same time, a number of weaknesses of the media sector can be observed, including restrictive laws, a lack of training among journalists and an influence of commercial interests on media content.

The current government’s roadmap for a return to a civilian one foresees the adoption of a new constitution by referendum, as well as a series of structural reforms prior to the election of a new government. The latter has been postponed to mid-2017 at the earliest after a first draft constitution has been rejected in September. Thailand is undergoing a constitutional reform process which will affect wide segments of its society, including the media sector.

II. UNESCO’S Media Development Indicators: Setting the Standards to Inform Media Policy Formulation

UNESCO’s mandate as set out in its 1945 Constitution specifically calls on the Organization to “promote the free flow of ideas by word and image”. To this end, UNESCO actively works towards developing an environment within which the media can best contribute to good governance and development and has set up a set of indicators called UNESCO’s Media Development Indicators (MDI) which provide a comprehensive framework to assess the media sector in a country and how it stands in relation to international standards.

The MDI embrace five major categories: a) Legal and regulatory framework; b) Plurality and diversity of media; c) Media as a platform for democratic discourse; d) Professional capacity building; and e) Infrastructural capacity. The UNESCO’s Media Development Indicators are now available in Thai. The set of indicators offers a comprehensive diagnostic tool in line with international standards and good practices.
III. Objectives of the Training

UNESCO will organize a 2.5 day training on the MDI for a group of 15-20 participants from Thailand: members of the national media reform council, policy makers, media regulators, researchers, journalism teachers, media professionals and representatives of civil society organizations. The workshop will be jointly conducted by two trainers with national and international expertise in media development.

The objectives of the training are to:

- enhance capacities of policy makers, media professionals and representatives of civil society organizations in international standards and good practices in the field of media development and media policies;
- present the UNESCO’s MDI to the researchers, journalism school teachers and media development partners in order to encourage research in this field based on a comprehensive framework for assessing the media landscape in Thailand;
- use the MDI as a reference for exploring how international standards and good practices can be incorporated into the media policy formulation in Thailand.

The training will combine presentations on the different categories of the MDI with interactive sessions addressing specific issues of the media sector in Thailand.