13 August 2026

Subject: Invitation to Ministers of Justice, Presidents of Supreme Courts, Presidents of Bar Associations, Presidents of Judges' Schools and Presidents of Magistrates' Unions for their participation in the global training programme on freedom of expression for members of the judiciary

Dear members of the judicial community,

We are pleased to inform you that UNESCO and the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights at the University of Oxford have developed the third version of a joint online training to promote international and regional standards on freedom of expression for judicial actors. This Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), which will be launched on 5 October 2026, aims to strengthen the role of judicial actors, especially judges, prosecutors, lawyers and representatives of judicial training institutes, in promoting freedom of expression standards and its corollaries, freedom of the press and access to information. The MOOC will cover, in particular: (1) the general principles and scope of freedom of expression; (2) the legitimate limitations on freedom of expression; (3) the right of access to information; (4) the safety of journalists; and (5) emerging trends in digitalisation and their impacts on freedom of expression.

This free five-week online programme is specifically designed for judicial actors (e.g., judicial branches, public ministries, public defenders, electoral courts, human rights ombudsmen, judicial law clerks, and law students) from all justice systems around the world, to strengthen their knowledge and capacities on international and regional standards on freedom of expression, access to information and the safety of journalists. In particular, the MOOC will build upon UNESCO's Judge's Initiative, which has engaged over 39,000 judicial actors from more than 160 countries around the world since 2013.

The MOOC will be available in the six official languages of the UN (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) and Portuguese, and will build on the highly successful joint UNESCO/Oxford global MOOC on freedom of expression, which drew more than 11,000 participants in 2021 and 2023.

Please find enclosed a brief description of the MOOC modules, as well as a flyer to advertise the course. We would be very grateful if you could circulate this information among your networks and members of the judiciary in your country and region, in order to publicise this important initiative.

The course will open on 5 October 2026 and will last five weeks. Registrations are now open on the following link: Register: UNESCO-Oxford Massive Online Open Course for Judicial Actors in October 2026 – Fill out form

In addition, please note that participants who successfully complete the course will receive a certificate of completion.

If you need further information about the training, please contact Mehdi Benchelah (m.benchelah@unesco.org), Senior Project Officer, or Dr Eliza Bechtold (eliza.bechtold@law.ox.ac.uk) from the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights.

Sincerely,

Professor Rachel Murray
Director of the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, University of Oxford

Mariya Gabriel
Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information Sector, UNESCO

Annex: Description of the MOOC modules for judicial actors

Module 1: General Principles and Scope of Freedom of Expression

The Module sets out the international legal framework underpinning the right to freedom of expression, notably under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and provides an overview of the general scope of the right in the doctrine of important regional protection regimes.

Module 2: Legitimate Limitations on Freedom of Expression

The Module explores the legitimate restrictions on the right to freedom of expression, as provided for in international and regional protection regimes, as well as the doctrine of courts.

Module 3: Right of access to information

The Module sets out the legal frameworks regarding the right of access to information, with a particular emphasis on the important role that it plays in ensuring democratic political processes and sustainable development.

Module 4: Safety of Journalists

The Module examines the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity, highlighting the physical risks that many journalists face in the exercise of their profession, including the specific threats faced by women journalists, and the role of the judiciary in protecting freedom of expression.

Module 5: Emerging trends in digitalisation

The Module explores the emerging trends in digitalisation and their impacts on freedom of expression that have arisen, particularly through the exercise of the right online, and how existing legal frameworks can be applied to address these issues.