

**Maurice Ali Speech: International Association of Independent Journalists Inc.**  
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First of all, I would like to thank the President of the UN General Assembly and the other Co-Facilitators for this opportunity, Distinguished Representatives of Member States, Stakeholder Panelists and Stakeholder Respondents, and everyone else in attendance today, greetings to everyone! My name is Maurice Ali and I am president of a citizen journalist association called the International Association of Independent Journalists, and in 2012 we produced a survey about citizen journalists called: “The Status of Citizen Journalists Around the World: 2012.” And I am happy to report to you on the findings of that report and how it relates to WSIS.

From the study we learned that the advantages of citizen journalism are many. Anyone can be a citizen journalist, and since citizen journalists are everywhere they can report on many news stories with supplied media content almost immediately. Citizen journalists mention regularly their problems getting access to some news events open to traditional news media and their concern for their safety at news events because they do not have the presence that traditional full-time reporters have. Because of their heavy reliance on the internet they worry about censorship and barriers to news acquisition and dissemination.

What follows are five recommendations based on the information from that report:

1. It is recommended that the concept of “citizen journalist” continue to be formalized and institutionalized in the same way as traditional journalism.
2. That citizen journalists be afforded similar rights of access as those in traditional media.
3. Some measure of protection should be given to citizen journalists at news events.
4. Some form of collaboration between citizen journalists and traditional news reporting media should be encouraged.
5. With 96% of citizen journalists in our study relying on the internet for dissemination of their information, it is recommended that all affected stakeholders continue to monitor and lobby relevant organizations to keep the Internet free of censorship or other barriers to acquisition or dissemination of information.

There is a place and desire for citizen journalism, but it can only survive if we have a free internet without filters or blocks. The internet needs to remain free so that all opinions are able to have a hearing in the minds of citizens with regard to any news event or issue. All voices need to be heard for individuals to have the information to make informed decisions or choices, and thus ultimately self-determination. Citizen journalism and an open internet will help ensure this.

Much of WSIS is about acquisition and dissemination of information in this technical age. And citizen journalists embrace that concept more than many other groups. Their ability to have ready access to information pertinent to their reporting along with the mechanisms to disseminate information to the public could well be one way of evaluating the ultimate impact of WSIS. Our attendance here today is a reminder of the very real impact good policy making can have in enriching all our lives for the better.

Thank you for your attention!