

## **Message to Mark Press Freedom Day**

2 May 2001

The concept of press freedom is a universal one and simple in its essence. It amounts to no more and no less than the elementary right of all people to have unfettered access to the means of truly expressing their opinions and conversely having access to media that fully reflect their life experience and their aspirations.

Press freedom therefore is not the exclusive right of the press or the media generally. It is an inherent right of all people everywhere.

As such it is entrenched in South Africa's constitution; and our people's elected representatives and society as a whole consider it their obligation to nurture freedom of the media and freedom of expression: to ensure that journalists are able to do their work without let or hindrance, fear of favour, and that citizens have access to information they need continually to change their lives for the better.

Nor can any of us remain content while press freedom in its fullest sense remains in practice something enjoyed mainly by an elite - urban rather than rural, rich rather than poor, industrialised rather than developing.

For all nations burdened with a legacy of underdevelopment and the imbalances of the past, together with our partners in the industrialised world, it must be a priority to ensure that freedom of the press is enjoyed to the full by all and not just by some.

Thus will all of humanity, on all continents, become informed and active citizens of the global village.

May Press Freedom Day strengthen our shared commitment to realise this ideal.