

**International Conference**  
**Media and Information Literacy**  
**for Building Culture of Open Government**

organized in the Framework of the UNESCO Information for All Programme  
and the VIII International IT Forum

Khanty-Mansiysk, Russian Federation, June 2016

Dear Organizers,

- Government of the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug – Ugra
- Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO
- Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications
- Russian Committee for the UNESCO Information for All Programme
- Interregional Library Cooperation Centre (Russian Federation)

Dear Participants and Experts,

The theme for this conference is apt and timely. Open government should be considered in the context of open and inclusive development. An open government should lead to open, and inclusive development that is based on the following pillars: 1) access to information and freedom of expression laws based on international standards, 2) a citizen-centric approach, and 3) a commitment to sustainable development based on human solidarity and peace at the national level as well as regional and global levels.

In the current context, the need for creating and strengthening institutional and human capacities takes on added significance. Realizing greater openness will demand strong political commitment at all levels of government, adequate

allocation of public resources, coupled with effective enforcement and monitoring mechanisms.

If open government is to be effective, awareness about the right to access information should be more widely expanded among the population at large, and particularly those who are marginalized or vulnerable.

Thus, the media, Internet and ICTs, when they are free, independent and pluralistic, can greatly facilitate access to information. However, there remain substantive challenges related to furthering their reach and addressing media and information literacy needs among all citizens to stimulate effective participation in the democratic and governance processes. Having access to information is a necessity but the impact of this access is magnified exponentially when citizens have the competencies to critically and effectively engage with the media, internet and other information providers. UNESCO through various programmes, including the Information for All Programme (IFAP), and in close cooperation with our Member States, have been promoting media and information literacy competencies for all. Our comprehensive programme covers curricula and resource development, guidelines for policy and strategy articulation, capacity development including through Massively Open Online Course (MOOCs), monitoring and assessment, networking, research and youth engagement.

Furthermore, paramount among the sustainable development goals (SDGs) recently adopted by the international development community are Goals 16 and 17 – promoting peace and inclusive societies for sustainable development and global partnership for sustainable development. The exchange of experiences and knowledge is at the heart of learning, creative and innovation processes.

Events such as this conference, organized in the framework of IFAP are crucial for global partnership.

The foregoing global shifts clearly challenges and call into question the relevance and adequacy of concepts such as “economic growth at all cost” and “trickle down effects”. These ideas are clearly being replaced with a shift to more holistic understanding of development, in line with the values that UNESCO has been promoting. Governments need to redouble their commitment to socially equitable and environmentally sustainable outcomes. In addition to their actions to support open government they must also focus on enlarging the public domain and making widely available the information necessary for effective decision making and participation at all levels of society. Building the public domain must necessarily involve governments, media, the private sector, civil society and international organizations, education, research and training institutions, etc.

Enhanced flows of information can bring tangible improvements in terms of access to education, healthcare and the provision of basic public services in general and cooperation among nations. It is when we focus on the connection between open government, equitable access to information and knowledge that we fully grasp the extent of their relevance and the urgency to pursue the path to sustainable development.

I should like to express my sincere appreciation to the organizers, the Government of the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug – Ugra, the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO, the Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications, the Russian Committee for the UNESCO Information for All Programme and the Interregional Library Cooperation Centre (Russian Federation), for the organization of this major event and for

their continued remarkable efforts for fostering equitable, open and inclusive knowledge societies.

I wish you every success in the holding of this important international Conference and look forward with great interest to the outcome of your deliberations.

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