**Statement Regarding the Government’s decision to establish a “Public Benefit Media Environment” Foundation**

**22 April 2025, Yerevan**

On April 17, 2025, the Government made a decision to create a foundation named “Public Benefit Media Environment.” The foundation intends to provide grants to the broadcasters holding a license to use a slot in the public multiplex, aimed at producing socially beneficial content (cultural, educational, instructional, scientific-educational, children’s, sports and other audiovisual programs).

We, the undersigned organizations, find it necessary to remind the authorities that several years ago, discussions were held between their representatives and the heads of journalistic public organizations regarding the provision of state support to the media and the establishment of a permanent foundation for this purpose. To execute this idea in the best way, we have studied international practices, which are key to developing an optimal model for Armenia. Unfortunately, the aforementioned process was discontinued, and the authorities have not yet responded to our attempts to resume it. Instead, the Government, without proper discussions, adopted a surprise decision to establish a foundation that exclusively supports the media broadcast in the public multiplex. This idea is entirely unrelated to the earlier processes, and we express our regret and concern over this development.

Back in 2022, ten journalistic organizations reached an agreement with the legislative and executive authorities that no legislative initiative or decision concerning the media sector would be enacted without discussions and cooperation with professional public organizations. In this regard, a tripartite [Memorandum](https://moj.am/storage/uploads/11MM.pdf) was signed between the relevant committee of the National Assembly, the RA Ministry of Justice, and 10 journalistic organizations. Moreover, the signature of the Ministry of Justice on that document, as the designated body for media-related issues, implied that it was representing the Government. Yet in reality, it appears that only this ministry, to some extent, complies with the provisions of the Memorandum. This cannot but negatively affect the pursuit of a consistent, conceptual policy in the media sector and the implementation of legislative reforms.

We observe that by adopting the above-mentioned Government decision, the authorities have breached the agreement set out in the Memorandum. This is not the first such instance – the same thing occurred last year at the initiative of the Commission on Television and Radio during the establishment of the Audiovisual Media Industrial Committee and the preceding legislative amendments.

The decision to establish the “Public Benefit Media Environment” Foundation, along with the legislative regulations for forming the industrial committee, were expected to become key elements of the state’s media policy and a product of modern conceptual approaches. In turn, these approaches imply inclusive processes in accordance with international trends and exclusion of selectivity among technological platforms. Yet, both initiatives are directed solely at television companies that hold a broadcasting license in the public multiplex.

We recognize the significance of the state’s willingness to contribute to the broad dissemination of socially beneficial content and to provide support for this purpose, especially in light of a sharp reduction in US international aid. However, considering also the ongoing changes in how audiences consume media, all Armenian media outlets should have been granted the right to access the foundation’s resources.

The Public TV and Radio Company is specifically tasked with producing and disseminating cultural, educational, instructional, and other socially beneficial content. This prompts the question of whether the institution may be falling short in adequately fulfilling its mission. If this is the case, what are the reasons, and shouldn’t resolving them be a priority? Or if the state is unable to resolve the issue of socially beneficial content through the Public Broadcaster, what is the guarantee that the creation of the aforementioned foundation will succeed in doing so?

Furthermore, under existing legislation, licensed private TV companies have already received privileges through tenders, including the right to broadcast in the public multiplex. In exchange, they committed to allocating at least 20% of their weekly airtime to children’s, educational, cultural, and sports-related programming. Now, however, it is presumed that funding will be allocated for a function that these companies are legally bound to carry out—one that was originally a condition for receiving their licenses.

At the core of the mentioned issues is the fragmented, non-conceptual approach to the legislation of media sector. It was particularly manifested in the 2020 Law “On Audiovisual Media,” which introduced ineffective solutions regarding the establishment of the public multiplex and digital services for terrestrial broadcasting – issues we had already pointed out back then. Unfortunately, we are now witnessing the same trends once again.

Another noteworthy point is that the draft charter of the foundation reads, on the one hand, that interference with broadcasters’ editorial policies is unacceptable, while on the other hand, it emphasizes that the support is aimed at publicizing the state’s messages. It is hard to imagine how this will be put into practice in today’s polarized broadcasting sector.

Based on the above, we call on the RA Government:

• to temporarily suspend the execution of the April 17 decision “On the Establishment of the “Public Benefit Media Environment” Foundation and the Approval of Its Charter” and to reassess the underlying approaches;

• to initiate discussions with stakeholder circles, aimed at analyzing the soundness and appropriateness of the adopted decision;

• to elaborate conceptual approaches and principles for the development of the entire media sector and implementation of state support for this purpose.

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