

# GIBA CODE OF CONDUCT

ENSURING RESPONSIBLE BROADCASTING



**giba**  
GHANA INDEPENDENT BROADCASTERS ASSOCIATION

Supported by:   
United Nations  
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(GIBA)**

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**Ensuring Responsible Broadcasting**

*2016*

### Message from Head of Office UNESCO Accra

As the preface of the UNESCO constitution reads, we in UNESCO believe that ... **“wars begin in the minds of men and women and therefore, it is in this minds of men and women that the defenses of peace must be constructed”**. It is this motto that guides us and sets our mandate as one of **“*promoting peace*”**.

We believe that media outlets are our natural allies, and whom we believe in order to play their role adequately, must recognize their dual character. Firstly, as **“promoters”** of free exchange of ideas and opinion, which is a pre-requisite for democracy and which, therefore, deserves highest protection and must be free from interference. Secondly, as a powerful **“social actor”**, whose choices about how to cover events and whose editorial position can shape events and impact the whole social fabric. The second character requires that you act in a socially responsible manner, in order to foster positive change and impact. It is this dual character that makes an effective form of self-regulation so essential.

Self-regulation is very important in your profession as it places requirement and responsibility upon every individual and level of the media organisation, on the journalist, their editors and managers, and on the approach of the media organisation to the production of content and the overall behaviour of the media company.

That is why we commend GIBA for this initiative to develop a Code of Conduct that will guide reportage.

Thank you

Tirso Dos Santos  
UNESCO, Head of Office and Representative

### **Message from the Executive Council of GIBA**

A free media is a prerequisite for a developing democracy like Ghana which relies on an informed citizenry. However media freedom comes with a responsibility for truth, impartiality, fairness and accountability.

As an association, one of GIBA's cardinal roles and objectives is to improve the practice of independent broadcasting. That comes with continuous engagement with all media practitioners and setting standards that will help sanitise the industry.

In recent times, the media's watchdog role has come under intense scrutiny nonetheless because of the lack of clearly defined boundaries and governance principles.

In coming up with this Code which builds on an earlier one launched in 2012, the Executive Council seeks to put in place guiding principles and standards that will help independent broadcasters self-regulate.

We trust that this Code will achieve the objective of ensuring that the media stays relevant, carries out its role of informing the citizenry and educating society, being a watchdog and holding government officials accountable for the socio-economic development of Ghana.

We thank all the pioneers of the industry, the Council of Elders of the Association, UNESCO for their support and all Members for their continuous support.

Akwasi Owusu Agyeman  
President

We, members of the **Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association (GIBA)**;

**Recognizing** the importance of the electronic media and the freedom of speech in consolidating Ghana's achievements in multi-party democratic governance,

**Guided** by the core journalistic principles of truth and accuracy, fairness and impartiality, independence, humanity, and accountability, and

**Determined** to create the enabling environment and level playing field that will ensure that citizens make informed choices, hereby agree and adopt this GIBA Code of Conduct for responsible broadcasting.

## **Preamble**

As the umbrella body of all independent broadcasters in Ghana, one of the key aims of GIBA is to promote high professional standards amongst practitioners. Besides promoting and protecting the interest of its members, GIBA seeks to promote ethical standards among broadcasters. The GIBA Code of Conduct is a statement of abiding principles, applicable to all members and has been drawn up as a guide to professional conduct in carrying out our obligation as media practitioners. It seeks to promote the responsible use of freedom of speech and ensure that the media do not abuse its powers.

This Code serves as a guide and a source of encouragement to Members of GIBA to take responsibility in the execution of their duties. It also serves as a guide to all stakeholders in the initiation of disciplinary action against any Member who flouts any Article of this Code. It does not in any way represent a bar to lawful action that may be initiated against a member station by an individual(s), institution(s) or a group(s) of persons for injurious, unlawful or unprofessional conduct. It is meant to ensure that Members pursue the virtue of integrity while adhering to the highest ethical standards, professional competence and good behaviour in carrying out our duties.

Recognizing that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy, our duty is to seek the truth always and provide a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues honestly. Much is expected of the media in carrying out our role as watchdogs of society and this should be undertaken with a high sense of integrity without infringing on the rights of individuals and the society in general.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

We hereby undertake to;

### **Article (1) Professionalism**

Ensure professional and ethical conduct grounded on the pursuit of the truth, focus on facts and issues, fairness, decency, transparency, balance, non-discrimination and the common good through appropriate planning, training, programming and resource allocation.

### **Article (2) Monitoring and Evaluation**

Set up an accessible, transparent and comprehensive system for monitoring programs, coverage, reportage and advertisement output, aimed at guaranteeing professionalism of member stations with regard to accountability, accuracy and fairness while ensuring equal opportunity for all.

### **Article (3) Objectionable Broadcast Material**

Preview, accept or refuse to broadcast any material or live/delayed utterance seen to be objectionable for any of the following reasons:

- i. Against public order or morality and or infringes any law of the land,
- ii. Offends national unity and or insensitive to the reputation, rights and freedoms of others.

### **Article (4) Bribery and Corruption**

Declare, publish and commit to a policy of zero tolerance for bribery and corruption with clear sanctions applicable to both givers and takers.

### **Article (5) Integrity**

Present information with integrity and avoid real or perceived conflict of interest, respect, intelligence and dignity of audience. Opinion and commentary must be clearly labelled.

### **Article (6) Right to Rejoinder**

Guarantee the right to rejoinder to be aired/broadcast promptly and prominently at the next marching opportunity after a complaint is received. Keep record and details of all complaints received and redress given.

### **Article (7) Editorial Independence**

Guarantee editors, presenters, show-hosts, reporters, editorial freedom from being seduced by sources or intimidated by power or authority. Assure good faith through accurate news content, free from bias and in context, and a fair presentation of all sides.

### **Article (8) Hate, Incitement and Insulting Speech**

Not to fan and not to inflame by broadcast of programmes, language, passions and activities that may lead to violence and disrupt the peace of the Country.

### **Article (9) Encourage Free Speech**

Create the platform for sustained civic dialogue and serve society with verified information. Attempt to represent fairly varied views and interests, while encouraging the public to decorously and freely express, without fear, their views and opinions.

### **Article (10) Public Education**

Devote air time and specific programs to educate the public on matters of national interest, processes and conduct, rules and regulations with particular emphasis on citizen rights and responsibilities, dos and don'ts.

### **Article (11) Cross Check Allegations**

Endeavour to substantiate all information and ensure they are obtained from only trusted and responsible sources.

### **Article (12) Misrepresentation**

Broadcasters must generally identify themselves and not obtain or seek to obtain information or other materials through misrepresentation or subterfuge. Subterfuge can be justified only in the public interest and only where material cannot be obtained by other means.

### **Article (13) Paying for news and content**

Broadcasters shall not receive any money as an incentive to publish any information. In cases where stations charge for news coverage of programme and product launches, this must be clearly stated in the stations rate card.

### **Article (14) Covering Ethnic, Religious and Sectarian activities**

Ethnic, Religious and Sectarian news shall be broadcast only after proper verification of facts and presented with circumspection. It must not lead to an atmosphere of national disharmony, conflict and enmity.

### **Article (15) Political and Election reportage**

- i. To bind in writing, panellists/discussants on particularly live political/elections related programmes to a strict and sanction-able (name, shame and/or evict) code of conduct.
- ii. Ensure Good Conduct Commitment by Political Talk Show hosts/presenters to serve as a deterrent to notorious panellists and contributors. Member stations should collaborate to deny any such repeated offenders access to the airwaves.
- iii. During an election reportage, instances such as alleged polling station electoral malpractices must be confirmed from the Electoral Commission officials and or head of official security detail at the relevant polling station and secure as far as is possible, the view of both sides, and or third persons, in any electoral dispute before it is put on air.
- iv. Not to be biased and partisan in their political programing and reportage.

### **Article (16) Reproduction**

To store news content (news reportage, coverage and programs by voice, visual, etc.) on a data storage device and readily have on hand and produce any such report within a stated period of at least 90 days, should any such request be made by an appropriate authority. When in doubt as to the identity or authority of a person or persons making any such request, the member station shall ask for guidance from the GIBA Secretariat or the National Media Commission.

### **Article (17) Copyright and Plagiarism**

Not to use works of art without reference to the laws of the land concerning copyright and plagiarism.

- i. Seek consent of owners of creative works and write-ups and acknowledge them.
- ii. Where the right is registered and goes with a fee, member stations shall ensure that the appropriate fee is paid.
- iii. Discourage plagiarism in all forms.

### **Article (18) Non Compliance and Sanctions**

The following shall be the process for imposing sanctions for infractions of the Code:

- i. Two (2) written warnings on first two (2) infractions.
- ii. Third written warning and a monetary fine of Two thousand Ghana Cedis (GHC 2,000.00).
- iii. Suspension of membership for three (3) months, with right of appeal, on fourth minor offense.
- iv. Suspension of membership for twelve months, with right of appeal, on fifth minor offence.
- v. Expulsion from GIBA with right of appeal after due internal hearing for major offence such as incitement to hate, violence, discrimination, distortion and or disruption of electoral process and outcomes.

### **NOTE: MAJOR AND MINOR OFFENCES**

Infraction of any of the under listed Articles of this Code of Conduct shall constitute a major offence that could result in the expulsion of the offending member station from GIBA under Article (18) Clause 5. All other infractions shall constitute minor offences with matching sanction.

***Applicable Articles:***

- 1. Article (3) Objectionable Broadcast Material***
- 2. Article (8) Hate, Incitement and Insulting Speech***