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Code of Ethic and Professional Conduct of Cambodian Professional Electronic Journalist

Cambodian professional electronic journalists, wishing to foster the highest standards of electronic journalism, promote public understanding of and confidence in electronic journalism, and strengthen principles of journalistic freedom to gather and disseminate information, unanimously establish this code of ethics and professional conduct. This code replicates portions of the code adopted by RTNDA in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, on September 14, 2000.

Preamble

Professional electronic journalists should operate as trustees of the public, seek the truth, report it fairly and with integrity and independence, and stand responsible for their actions.

Public Trust

Professional electronic journalists should recognize that their first obligation is to the public.

Professional electronic journalists should:

- Understand that any commitment other than service to the public undermines trust and credibility.
- Recognize that service in the public interest creates an obligation to reflect the diversity of the community and guard against the over simplification of the issues and events. On the contrary, they should provide a full range of information to enable the public to make enlightened decisions.
- Not libel others.

Truth

Professional electronic journalists should pursue truth aggressively and present (disseminate) the news accurately, in context, and as widely and completely as possible. (Cambodian #8 incorporated in this)

Professional electronic journalists should:

- Continuously seek the truth and resist against distortions that obscure the importance of events.

- Clearly disclose the origin of information and label all material they have received, i.e., from whom and where.
- Protect the source.

Professional electronic journalists should not:

- Report anything they know to be false and manipulate images or sounds in any way that is misleading.
- Present images or sounds that are reenacted without informing the public.
- Plagiarize. (Cambodian #4)

Fairness

Professional electronic journalists should present the news fairly and impartially, placing primary value on significance and relevance and including all sides of a story. (Incorporate Cambodian #7)

Professional electronic journalists should:

- Treat all the subjects of news coverage with respect and dignity, showing particular compassion to victims of crime or tragedy.
- Exercise special care when children are involved in a story and give children greater protection than adult.
- Seek to understand the diversity of their community and inform the public without bias or stereotype.
- Present a diversity of expressions, opinions, and ideas in the society.
- Present analytical reporting based on professional perspective, not personal bias.
- Respect the right to a fair trial.

Professional electronic journalists should not:

- Intentionally attack or criticize a person. (Cambodian #9)

Integrity

Professional electronic journalists should present or disseminate the news with integrity and decency, avoiding real or perceived conflicts of interests, and respect the dignity of and intelligence of the audience as well as the subjects of the news.

Professional electronic journalists should:

- Identify sources whenever possible. Confidential sources should be used only when it is clearly in the public interest to gather or convey important information or when a person providing information might be harmed. Journalists should keep all commitments to protect a confidential source. (Cambodian#1)
- Clearly label opinion and commentary.
- Guard against extended coverage of events or individuals that fails to significantly advance a story, place the event in context. or add to the public knowledge.

- Refrain from contacting participants in violent situations while the situation is in progress.
- Use technological tools with skill and thoughtfulness, avoiding techniques that skew facts, distort reality, or sensationalize events.
- Use surreptitious newsgathering techniques, including hidden cameras or microphones, only if there is no other way to obtain stories of significant public importance and only if the technique is explained to the audience.
- Disseminate the private transmissions of other news organizations only with permission.

Professional electronic journalists should not:

- Pay news sources who have a vested interest in a story. (Cambodian#5)
- Accept gifts, favors, or compensation from those who might seek to influence coverage.
- Engage in activities that may compromise their integrity or independence.
- Insert personal opinion in a news story. (Cambodian #6)
- Refuse to broadcast corrections upon validation of inaccuracy, whether discovered by staff or received as complaints from audience. (Cambodian #10)

Independence

Professional electronic journalists should defend the independence of all journalists from those seeking or control over news content.

Professional electronic journalists should:

- Gather and report news without fear or bias, and vigorously resist undue influence from any outside forces, including advertisers, sources, story subjects, powerful individuals, and special interest groups.
- Resist those who would seek to buy or politically influence news content or who would seek to intimidate those who gather and disseminate the news.
- Determine news content solely through editorial judgment, i.e., not as the result of outside influence.
- Resist any self-interest or peer pressure that might erode journalistic duty and service to the public.
- Recognize that sponsorship of the news will not be used in any way to determine, resist, or manipulate content.
- Refuse to allow the interests of ownership or management to influence news judgment and content inappropriately.
- Defend the rights of the free press for all journalists, recognizing that any professional or government licensing of journalists is a violation of that freedom.

Accountability

Professional electronic journalists should recognize that they are accountable their actions to the public, the profession, and themselves.

Professional journalists should:

- Actively encourage adherence to these standards by all journalists and their employees.
- Respond to public concerns. Investigate complaints and correct errors promptly and with as much prominence as the original report.
- Explain journalistic processes to the public, especially when practices spark questions or controversy.
- Recognize that professional electronic journalists are duty-bound to conduct themselves ethically.
- Refrain from ordering or encouraging courses of action that would force colleagues to commit an unethical act.
- Carefully listen to colleagues who raise ethical objections and create environments in which such objections and discussions are encouraged.
- Seek support for and provide opportunities to train employees in ethical decision-making.

In meeting with its responsibility to the profession of electronic journalism, Cambodian professional electronic journalists have created this code to identify important issues, to serve as a guide for their colleagues, to facilitate self-scrutiny, and to shape future debate.

Adopted in the journalism training course for Cambodian journalists held in xxx.