

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
YOUTH CONVENTION 2019

# INTERNATIONAL PRESS GALLERY

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TOPIC GUIDE

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# WELCOME LETTER FROM DIAS

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the very first edition of the International Press Gallery at the Sustainable Development Youth Convention 2019! We are honoured to work with you and serve as your Chairpersons for this occasion.

Many of you have joined this council in pursuit of new experiences, and we are delighted to inform you that your time at IPG will definitely leave you with nothing more to desire. We have peppered in mechanisms that will no doubt spice up the life of any journalist, so prepare yourselves for 3 days of constant motion, valuable relationships, and diverting interrogations.

You will have the opportunity to observe debate in various councils and push debate in a different direction with every question you ask. With every press conference, article, and Twitter post, you'll be able to influence the delegates' solutions, challenge their agendas, and even affect their stances. This, of course, will require keen information sourcing and analysis, along with detailed and sharp research in order to successfully critique the other delegates. While it may sound intimidating, we assure you that it will be an exciting and invigorating learning experience, and we believe that each and every one of you is up for it.

We hope that all of you will step out of your comfort zones and push yourselves to seize all the opportunities present to you as a press delegate for the most rewarding experience. If you have any queries, do feel free to email us.

We wish you the best, and look forward to seeing you at the conference!

Sincerely,  
Zheng Chong Emily,  
Dayrius Tay Jiale,  
Chairs of IPG SDYC 2019

## ABOUT THE CHAIRS

### ***Zheng Chong Emily - Press Coordinator***

Your press coordinator - Emily - entered SDYC OT as an IOC member. To be perfectly honest, she never expected to end up here as an honorary academic committee member. However, as she realised the potential interrogation possibilities of press conferences and discussed award names (which were all eventually veto-ed), she grew excited to be a press chair. She looks forward to witnessing her delegates' journeys and hope that they too look forward to exploring mun from a different point of view. Don't be afraid to approach her for feedback, advice or simply to make conversation!



### ***Dayrius Tay Jiale - Editor-in-Chief***

Dayrius, the Editor-in-Chief of Press, is your stereotypical NUSH kid. As an avid cyclist and PC gamer (not simultaneously), Dayrius builds computers, does astronomy and has retired from physics to be here. He hopes that press delegates will appreciate the intricacies of writing. Fun fact: Dayrius was named after a supposedly evil Persian emperor.

# INTRODUCTION TO THE PRESS

Journalists are essential. They dissect and digest information into bite-sized chunks for the public, and accurately and swiftly disseminate information. To accomplish this, journalists put themselves on the frontlines of war, disease, and pandemonium to accrue information and deliver real-time coverage. In addition, the work of journalists is scrutinised heavily - most visibly by the public, but as a result also by a team of editors who check for factual and linguistic errors in order to ensure the integrity of their publication. The path to publishing bombshell articles is a long and arduous one - sometimes riddled with death threats, false imprisonment, and intimidation - but more often by the laborious task of maintaining relationships with sources and churning out the articles themselves.

Meanwhile, politicians and envoys at the United Nations are responsible for building ties with other countries and pushing forth their countries' agenda in order to secure the best compromise for their countries. As such, diplomats may sometimes be so fixated on their national interests that they overlook external circumstances and neglect the grave ramifications of their actions. Standing between the diplomats and the public, it is thus the duty of the press to challenge them to be ambitious and tactical, yet realistic and compassionate.

# CASE STUDIES

## 1. Political Influence: The “CNN Effect”

The term “Fourth Estate” has long been used to describe the role of the press in influencing political issues, through explicit advocacy or more subtle framing and intelligent wielding of the language. However, the phenomenon was perhaps never more pronounced than in the late Cold War period - where the American news channel “Cable News Network” (CNN) was said to have brought the attention of the public and political consciousness to many overseas events (like the Tiananmen Square Massacre, the Kurdish Crisis, and the Bosnian crisis) via the display of shocking images and reporting - ultimately leading to US intervention and involvement. Furthermore, their reporting had greatly influenced policy and led to landmark decisions - for example, their coverage of the Black Hawk Down operation eventually led to the downscaling of humanitarian efforts and contribution to the UN, and ultimately the first and only veto used in a UN Secretary-General election for Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

However, more coverage may not necessarily equate to more empathy and action. A clear example is the crisis in Syria - where public outcry and serious responses from global powers seem to have dried up. Richard Gowan, an international affairs scholar, ascribed the puzzling reversing of the effect to “the sheer amount of information we get, coupled with the fact that we often don’t know if it’s real, contributes to a sense of hopelessness.” Clearly, excessive coverage especially from different sources with different biases serves to simply obfuscate the subject matter and confuse the public.

## 2. Exposés: Theranos

The press is integral in ensuring the transparency of our institutions, and the paragon of this is the labefaction of Theranos. Theranos was founded by a woman with a grand vision: to revolutionise blood testing. She envisioned a world without the feared hypodermic needles of yore. In its place were nanotainers that stored a single drop of blood from pricking a finger. Hundreds of tests would be conducted on that minuscule volume on a cutting-edge device. Theranos was valued at US\$9 billion at its prime. Thus, a cavalcade of rich and powerful men had bought into this vision, including the former US president Bill Clinton and media mogul Rupert Murdoch, effectively acting as character referees for its founder while endorsing the brand. Except that it was not to be. The requisite technology for such a massive upheaval in medicine was just a glimmer in the horizon. So how did Theranos become so big?

Today, Theranos embodies the pervasive ‘fake it till you make it’ culture in Silicon Valley, where startups dupe investors until they can eventually deliver. Theranos was a particularly appalling case. In a damning exposé published in the Wall Street Journal, John Carreyrou revealed the systemic fraud permeating the entire company. Theranos’ valuation plummeted to virtually nothing as investors conjured a litany of lawsuits and investigations. This was the culminating achievement from his years of meticulous investigations, involving clandestine interviews with staff and insiders. Eventually, John published a deep dive into the inner workings of Theranos in “Bad Blood: Secrets and Lies in a Silicon Valley Startup”, a critically acclaimed book detailing how Elizabeth Holmes set up a web of deception and intimidation. It spells out John’s onerous journey through a myriad of lawsuits and scare tactics to unravel the Theranos delusion.

The downfall of Theranos exemplifies the powers of journalism. Exposing lies and deception, journalists are integral in dispelling the fog of public relations euphemisms that swamp consumers.

### 3. Sensationalism & Failures

However, even as movies like *Spotlight* and *All the President's Men* glorify the work of investigative journalists, overzealous reporting has the potential to end tragically. Typically intrusive media coverage impacts their subjects insidiously by affecting their mental health as their private issues are scandalised and put in the limelight. On the contrary, the well-publicised death of Princess Diana was more direct. Pursued by paparazzi, her Mercedes sped in excess of double the speed limit, fatally crashing within a tunnel. While there were allegations that the driver was intoxicated, the undeniable role of the press in this tragic misadventure triggered a rethink of journalistic ethics.

The advent of the Internet has ravaged traditional media with plunging ad revenue, forcing publications to pivot towards matters of public attention instead of public interest. Resource intensive corruption exposés are being phased out in favor of eye-catching kitten videos as papers vie for the fleeting attention of millennials. Following the takeover of *Orlando Sentinel* by billionaire Sam Zell, he told the concerned newsroom - "you need to in effect help me by being a journalist that focuses on what our readers want and therefore generates more revenue." When a journalist pointed out the distinction between what readers craved (e.g. puppies) and matters of significance, Zell took umbrage and delivered the eminently quotable line, "You're giving me the classic, what I would call journalistic arrogance, of deciding that puppies don't count . . . Hopefully we get to a point where our revenue is so significant that we can do puppies and Iraq. O.K.? F\*\*\* you."<sup>1 2</sup>

The increasing prominence of sensationalist media and the increasing drive for more clicks can also have wide political impacts. For example, the repeated and well-documented smorgasbord gaffes by many news agencies on US-Russia relations have the potential to incite greater fear and further polarise the populace.

<sup>1</sup> <https://gawker.com/5002815/exclusive-sam-zell-says-fuck-to-his-journalist>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2016/08/john-oliver-journalism-clickbait-last-week-tonight>

# ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS GALLERY AT SDYC'19

Press delegates are to chiefly gather information regarding debate by sitting in during committee sessions (though they can do so through any other means, eg. lobbying committee delegates to act as their insiders in exchange for positive reporting). When press delegates feel that they have enough material to write their articles, they can return to the IPG HQ, where they can ask their press directors for input, discuss possible angles and content with their fellow delegates, and have a peaceful place to work on their articles.

In order to render a realistic simulation of the press, where the work of faux-journalists influences the direction of debate, delegates will be allowed to hold interviews and press conferences, giving delegates the opportunity to influence debate and cross-examine other delegates.

Delegates are to note that all movement across committees must first be communicated to the Press Chairs.

## **Observing Committee Debate**

When the council is in the General Speaker's List (GSL) or having a moderated caucus, press delegates are to observe the council discreetly from the back of the room. While delegates are permitted to move around to take photos for their articles, they are not to disturb the delegates or approach them for any reason. Should a press delegate wish to communicate with any committee delegate, they may employ the help of friendly notepassers to make any inquiries - but do note that all notes should be appropriate and relevant to the matter at hand.

### **Press Conferences**

Press conferences will be held in every council several times over the conference. A tentative schedule will be released at the beginning of SDYC so that delegates may refer to it and prepare themselves for each press conference. However, delegates should note that the schedule may change unexpectedly due to the unpredictable nature of debate and should keep an eye on any updates from their chairs.

At the beginning of each day, press delegates are to choose which press conferences they would like to attend. It should be noted that every delegate is expected to attend at least attend 4 press conferences over the course of the 3 days. However, the number of press conferences delegates may attend each day will not be fixed. Delegates are advised to choose committees that they have researched on and fulfill one of the following conditions:

- Gain information that will bolster their articles, or
- Influence the debate in that committee.

Press conferences are opportunities for delegates to break up the monotony of rambling debate - by firing questions at delegates of their choosing. These questions may be clarifications on stances, cloaked suggestions, aired opinions, or loaded questions designed to corner the delegates. Besides garnering content for their articles, a good press delegate should strive to influence debate with trenchant questions. These should improve the productivity of a committee and its quality of debate. Should a press delegate find debate straying off tangent, they can attempt to reorient the committee by probing the delegates for the relevance of their proposed concerns and solutions, and reminding them of the bigger picture.

Each press conference will be conducted by a panel of press delegates that will occupy the front of the room. Every panel will be given a maximum of 10 minutes to garner desired information and question the delegates to their liking. Press conferences will be moderated by one of the Press chairs, who will choose one press delegate at a time to raise a singular question. Questions should be directed at a singular delegate in the committee, or be open - after which delegates in the committee may volunteer to answer, and the press delegate may select one delegate to respond.

Despite conflicting or antagonistic agendas, delegates must ensure that they still maintain decorum and behave appropriately to both committee delegates and fellow press delegates. The press chairs, while chiefly acting as moderators, will step in if any press conference is excessively hostile or inappropriate. Furthermore, since there may be many press delegates at any given press conference, press delegates should ensure that they make their questions count.

# MEDIA FORMS

## **Expectations of Delegates**

Delegates are expected to sit in on committee sessions in order to gather information on debate for the council that they have been assigned to. Delegates are expected to produce at least two articles per day - one news and one editorial - which will be published on a live feed that will be available to all delegates online, screened to delegates during lunch, or shown during committee sessions if their chairs believe it is apt. However, delegates with the aptitude are encouraged to pen even more articles - though quality should still be maintained. Delegates are not expected to report on events outside of committee session, eg. opening and closing ceremony; D&D.

## **Twitter**

Delegates will be allocated a Twitter account to post updates about ongoing council activity. This platform should be used for succinct bits of information and not rambling prose. It is an especially powerful tool for delegates with huge scoops or revelations that they wish to release before they finish writing an article. Furthermore, Twitter can be used for excoriating delegates or even other news agencies due to its more casual nature, though delegates should still be appropriate.

## **Article Format**

Articles are to be submitted to press chairs for vetting. They will be uploaded to a combined blog, which will be made available to the entire conference. Please take note of the following formatting guidelines:

1. A recommended maximum word count of 600-800 words for most articles - delegates are encouraged to write with a view to clarity and brevity.
2. Titles should be limited to 7 words. Thus, delegates are expected to produce eye-catching and creative titles that may also communicate the agency's stance.
3. Taglines should be limited to 20 words. This serves as a succinct encapsulation of the entire article, or perhaps quotes to draw in the readers' attention.
4. Any accompanying photos or media is optional.

### **Deadlines**

All articles for the day are expected to be submitted to the chairs by 1830 SGT. Should delegates need more time to work, an hour extension may be granted at the chairs' discretion.

### **Feedback**

The chairs will provide four rounds of feedback in total; one pre-conference round and three daily rounds. This feedback serves as a starting point for delegates to improve their writing skills. Should delegates require further advice, feel free to approach the chairs.

# JOURNALISTIC WRITING AND EXPRESSION

## **What to Write**

The art of journalism is incorporating subtle nudges to steer the reader towards a certain premeditated conclusion. This can be accomplished by presenting a lopsided, yet factually accurate version of events or using phrasing to squeeze in a biased view.

Delegates are encouraged to write both basic news articles and editorials. This serves to broaden the scope of work and allows a more rigorous assessment of the delegates' capabilities. The style and depth of the articles are moulded by the nature of each assigned agency. For instance, KCNA might pad on more adjectives to give a not-so-subtle slant while ABC might aim for objectivity. In addition, the articles should not be a transcript of proceedings or a laundry list of occurrences. Thus, a good news article gives a brief overview of the topic discussed followed by a summary of what has been achieved through the session. Notable moments and quotes should be included to add specificity. Note that this structure is not cast in stone and delegates are free to experiment with other formats and styles, as they see fit. Alternatively, delegates can also choose to comment on the contributions of particular delegates or pertinent ideas raised during debate.

The suggested structure for news articles is to follow the inverted pyramid structure, with the important information front-loaded into a short introductory paragraph, comprising of the most intriguing and unexpected parts of the story.

## **Editorial Writing**

Op-Eds give delegates more breathing room to include their own opinions and analysis. The requirement for maintaining a stance consistent with the organisation is relaxed here, so delegates will have free rein to expound on their arguments. These articles can be regarding the topic of discussion or potential resolutions, but delegates are free to explore related issues. An Op-Ed is basically journalism unshackled, there is no requirement to reference the council or points of debate.

Clearly, op-eds and news articles are fundamentally different. The crux of this is that news articles are largely objective and constitute factual reporting, while Op-Eds are structured like an argumentative essay which forwards a particular notion, opinion or stance.

## INTERNATIONAL PRESS GALLERY

Alternative article styles that do not conform to the aforementioned two are also permissible, such as interview-based articles that revolve around a particular delegate. Delegates are encouraged to experiment with various article styles and explore the intricacies of each. The occasional unorthodox article will be considered favourably. Lastly, do bring along a camera/decent smartphone to capture snapshots to complement the articles. The quality of images is ancillary however, so there is no need to spend all afternoon hunching over Photoshop.

### **Criticism**

If the debate does not yield much progress, delegates might find themselves in a bind trying to write a news article on non-existent content. In this case, delegates could spin a story on the incompetence of the delegates or devote more room for background information. Some creativity and improvisation might be needed to eke out an article here. There is a rather fuzzy distinction between reasonable criticism and nihilistic cynicism. Both are permissible for certain organisations. As a rule of thumb, press delegates should avoid lambasting committee delegates. Focus on their actions instead. Most importantly, slandering anyone is a breach of conduct and runs against the spirit of journalism. This might result in a real-world backlash from the targeted individual or other unpleasant consequences.

### **Integrity**

All information should be reported in good faith. Slanting the article is distinct from fabricating it. As such, delegates are encouraged to preserve any notes or recordings taken as evidence.

### **Research**

Delegates are heavily encouraged to peruse council guides to grasp the agenda for council, and do further research to derive their agency's opinions on potential subjects of debate.

Furthermore, delegates are reminded to familiarise themselves with the Rules of Procedure and have a rough idea of Model UN protocol. This can prevent them from being stumped when delegates splurt procedural jargon and ensures that one will never inadvertently walk out when things get interesting.

## Standards

There is much more to journalism and writing than fanciful language and vocabulary. Instead, delegates will be judged on the relevance of their articles and the consistency with their organisation's stance. Nevertheless, appropriate punctuation and grammar is a basic expectation, and while certain agencies (KCNA) might lack basic quality control measures, releasing articles riddled with basic linguistic errors is not an aspect worth emulating.

# NEWS AGENCIES

News agencies that will be represented by delegates at SDYC 2019 are:

Al Jazeera
AlterNet
Breitbart News Network
Buzzfeed
Catholic News Agency (CNA)
Environment News Service (ENS)
Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA)
Kaiser Health News (KHN)
Korean Central News Agency (KCNA)
Russian News Agency TASS (TASS)
South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC)
The New Humanitarian (IRIN)
The New Yorker
Xinhua News Agency