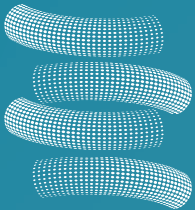


WORKSTREAM ON INFORMATION INTEGRITY ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES



Interim report ahead of COP30



A WORKSTREAM OF THE PARTNERSHIP FOR
INFORMATION AND DEMOCRACY



WORKSTREAM ON INFORMATION INTEGRITY ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Recognizing the growing threats posed by climate and environmental disinformation, attacks against press freedom, environmental journalists and activists and the importance of information integrity to tackle the climate and environmental crisis, the governments of Armenia and Brazil, in collaboration with the Forum on Information and Democracy, launched a dedicated workstream as part of the Partnership for Information and Democracy in February 2025. Convening interested States from the Partnership for Information and Democracy, civil society organizations, and researchers, the workstream held four meetings (17 April, 27 May, 3 July, 1 October 2025) to examine challenges, share research, and identify practical policy and institutional responses.

The workstream on ***Information Integrity, Climate Change, and Other Environmental Issues*** coordinates its efforts with the Global Initiative on Information Integrity on Climate Change and provides insights in the run-up to COP30 hosted by Brazil and COP17 to be hosted in 2026 by Armenia.

This interim report provides the preliminary results of the workstream, both the analysis of the information crisis, and the policy recommendations that can inspire COP30 discussions and outcomes.



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA



¹ Forum on Information and Democracy (2025), Workstream on Information Integrity, Climate Change and Other Environmental Issues, <https://informationdemocracy.org/workstream/workstream-strengthening-information-integrity-on-climate-change-and-other-environmental-issues/>

THE INFORMATION INTEGRITY CRISIS ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE ISSUES

Access to reliable, independent and pluralistic information about climate and environment are preconditions for an informed public debate, accountability and the development and implementation of urgently needed policy measures to tackle climate change and protect the environment. While climate disinformation has received some international attention, including from scholars, civil society and government, the information integrity crisis, as identified by the workstream, is multifaceted and touching upon issues beyond climate change. Notably, biodiversity is an “overlooked challenge” in the landscape of information integrity while a persistent information gap, where credible scientific knowledge fails to reach the broader public, allows misinformation and disinformation to fill the void.²

Sophisticated disinformation campaigns are increasingly coordinated, well-funded, targeted, and strategic, shifting from outright denial to narratives of delay and doubt.

Climate change and environmental disinformation refers to the deliberate spread of false or misleading information about climate change and environmental issues, intended to create confusion, delay policy action, or undermine public trust in the science and urgency of environmental challenges. It cultivates skepticism, uncertainty, and inaction on a global scale.

As one of the issues that suffers from the most partisanship and polarisation, it is also one of the most impacted issues by disinformation. As a result, climate disinformation is often not only leveraged in order to hinder effective climate action, but also used as an inroads for other types of disinformation aimed at **sowing division** and further tearing at the social fabric of society.³

Climate change disinformation is characterized by its coordinated, heavily financed, and tailored nature:

- **Coordinated nature:** it involves a network of actors who work in unison to spread specific messages or narratives, often across multiple platforms and media channels.⁴
- **Heavily financed:** This financial backing comes from multiple sources, many of which have a vested interest in delaying climate action, such as fossil fuel companies.⁵
- **Tailored to specific audiences:** particularly policy makers.⁶ Over the years, the disinformation narratives have been shifting from simple denial of climate change to more sophisticated tactics that aim to sow confusion and uncertainty about policy levers and solutions, adapting to changes in audience perceptions.

² Insights from the Meeting of the Workstream on 27 May 2025

³ Insights from the Meeting of the Workstream on 17 April 2025

⁴ Andrew Heffernan, “Countering Fossil-Fuelled Climate Disinformation to Save Democracy,” Centre for International Governance Innovation, November 21, 2024,

⁵ Angela V. Carter, *Fossilized: Environmental Policy in Canada’s Petro-Provinces* (UBC Press, 2020).

⁶ IPIE (2025), *Information Integrity about Climate Science: A Systematic Review*, www.ipie.info/research/sr2025-1

Similar tactics are visible regarding other environmental issues such as on debates over biodiversity loss, deforestation, pollution risks, and other environmental challenges.⁷

Finally, the advent of artificial intelligence and its capacity to produce realistic seeming deepfakes drastically increases the capabilities for targeted widespread campaigns that have further polluted the information space, where even real images of climate catastrophes—fires, floods, famine—can seem suspect or manipulated.⁸

The opaque online advertising market and dominant platform business models incentivize the spread of misleading and harmful content.

Given the engagement driven business model of online platforms, disinformation has become a **lucrative business**, as advertising revenue underpins the attention economy and harmful content is algorithmically promoted precisely because it drives longer user engagement. The current regulatory environment, where it exists, is one filled with both vulnerabilities and opportunities—where multiple actors, including hostile states, fossil fuel interests, political figures, and so-called “outrage merchants,” actively exploit gaps in governance to spread misleading content for political or financial gain.

The **advertising sector is opaque**, without “know your customer” laws in this space, and many advertisers lack visibility into where their ads are being placed. This lack of transparency enables **inadvertent funding of disinformation** and makes it nearly impossible for even well-intentioned brands to avoid contributing to the problem.⁹ Complicating matters further are the functioning of online platforms, promoting an information overflow, while giving little attention to reliable information.¹⁰

Research by Fundación Karisma, for example, shows that **automated moderation systems disproportionately flag or suppress content on environmental and human rights topics**. Advocacy posts are often shadowbanned, removed, or classified under “sensitive” categories.¹¹

The **rise of peer-to-peer content**, where information is shared through personal networks, often appearing to originate from trusted individuals rather than institutional sources, that can however be infiltrated further undermines trust.

⁷ Insights from the Meeting of the Workstream on 3 July 2025

⁸ Insights from the Meeting of the Workstream on 17 April 2025

⁹ Insights from the Meeting of the Workstream on 3 July 2025

¹⁰ Insights from the Meeting of the Workstream on 3 July 2025

¹¹ Insights from the Meeting of the Workstream on 1 October 2025

Actors with vested interests engage in influence operations, obscuring accountability and misinforming the public.

The fossil fuel industry is deliberately **downplaying the connection between climate change and extreme weather events**. In addition, they employ **greenwashing strategies** portraying themselves as environmentally sustainable.¹² Other business sectors can also engage in these tactics. Further key actors include populist and far-right political figures, certain state actors, hired experts, think tanks and segments of both traditional and digital media.¹³

Environmental journalists, researchers, and defenders face escalating threats, harassment, and violence, shrinking press freedom and civic space.

Environmental journalism and defenders play a critical role in exposing ecological harm, amplifying community struggles, and holding powerful actors accountable. Yet they are facing increasing **threats and violence**. According to UNESCO figures at least 44 environmental journalists were killed in the last 15 years.¹⁴ In RSF's Scorched Lands of Journalism in the Amazon, 66 violations against press freedom were documented in just one year across Brazil's nine Amazonian states, primarily targeting local journalists who report on deforestation, mining, agribusiness, and indigenous land rights.¹⁵

Between 2012 and 2022, at least 1,700 land and **environmental defenders were killed**, with many cases going unreported and unpunished.¹⁶ Defenders from Indigenous, rural, or marginalized communities are particularly vulnerable due to limited legal protections and systemic discrimination. In addition to **physical risks**, defenders face **digital harassment**, surveillance, and online hate campaigns, with women defenders particularly vulnerable to technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

The **overall situation of press freedom** further complicates reporting. RSF has found that nearly two-thirds of the world's natural resource rents are generated in countries with press freedom conditions ranked as "difficult" or "very serious."¹⁷ These environments—ranging from authoritarian regimes to politically unstable democracies—actively restrict access to information.¹⁸

The **fragility of traditional business models for journalism**, particularly as online platforms prioritize click-driven content and, increasingly, "no-click" AI-generated summaries further hamper the possibilities for journalistic reporting, as their survival is under threat.¹⁹

¹² Rachel Griffin, "Algorithmic Content Moderation Brings New Opportunities and Risks," Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2023.

¹³ IPIE (2025), Information Integrity about Climate Science: A Systematic Review, www.ipie.info/research/sr2025-1

¹⁴ UNESCO (2024), www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-report-reveals-70-environmental-journalists-have-been-attacked-their-work

¹⁵ Reporters Without Borders "Scorched Lands of Journalism in the Amazon RSP Report" <https://rsf.org/en/scorched-lands-journalism-amazon-rsf-report>

¹⁶ Ali Hines, "Decade of Defiance," Global Witness, 2023.

¹⁷ Reporter Without Borders (2024), Two Thirds of World's Natural Resources are Extracted in Countries Where Press Freedom is in Serious Danger, <https://rsf.org/en/two-thirds-world-s-natural-resources-are-extracted-countries-where-press-freedom-serious-danger>

¹⁸ Insights from the Meeting of the Workstream on 17 April 2025

¹⁹ Insights from the Meeting of the Workstream on 1 October 2025

Digital exclusion undermines the right to access information.

According to research from Derechos Digitales, Nupef, Tedic and Fondation Karisma deep **digital inequalities** in some regions undermine access to accurate information. Communities rely on unstable connections or remain excluded from online access altogether. In response, community-led alternatives have emerged to provide low-cost internet access, but these initiatives face barriers ranging from restrictive licensing to lack of investment.²⁰

Access to environmental information is restricted in practice.

One of the key levers to investigate climate and environmental issues and provide accurate information is access to environmental information. Although international and regional instruments—from the Aarhus Convention and Escazú Agreements to UN resolutions—recognize access to environmental information as a legal right and an essential enabler of environmental protection, this **right is often poorly implemented or actively obstructed**.²¹ Corporate actors are rarely held accountable for information suppression.

PRELIMINARY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

PLATFORM TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY AND ACCESS TO **RELIABLE ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION**:

- States should recognize platforms as active players with responsibilities and implement **appropriate regulatory frameworks**. These frameworks must be **grounded in a firm commitment to human rights**, including freedom of expression, press freedom, and the right to scientific inquiry.
- They should outline clear regulatory obligations including **transparency, data access, user empowerment, algorithmic transparency, interoperability and pluralism, risk mitigation measures and assessments**, thereby establishing accountability. This must also include mandatory **ad libraries** and the proactive **removal of monetization opportunities for known sources of climate denial**.

²⁰ Insights from the Meeting of the Workstream on 1 October 2025

²¹ Emily Barrit, "Theme and Variations: The Aarhus Convention and Escazú Agreement – GNHRE," accessed July 28, 2025.

- It is particularly important to **strengthen access to reliable information** on environmental and climate issues by providing **due prominence to journalistic sources**, identified through self-regulatory mechanisms such as the Journalism Trust Initiative.

- Where regulatory frameworks on platform accountability are in place, these should be used proactively to tackle climate and environmental disinformation, in integrating these issues in systemic risk obligations and data access frameworks. When provisions on access to pluralistic information sources exist, these should be used to promote public interest media's content on these issues.

PROTECTIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISTS AND DEFENDERS:

- The effective protection of environmental journalists and defenders requires **legal safeguards and ending impunity** for crimes committed against journalists and defenders.

- States could establish **national action plans for the safety of environmental journalists**, including rapid-response mechanisms. The plans and measures must be culturally, socially, and territorially adapted.

STRENGTHENING MEDIA FREEDOM AND SUSTAINABILITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM

- States should recognise **environmental journalism as a public good** and the importance of **equitable access to accurate information** across diverse linguistic and socio-political contexts.

- This requires investing in and creating a favourable environment for the **sustainability of a media ecosystem** dedicated to covering environmental issues, with the development of public policies on financing, subsidies, and criteria for the distribution of state advertising. This also requires **investment in training** and ensuring **freedom of the press**.

STRENGTHENING ACCESS TO ENVIRONMENTAL DATA AND INFORMATION AND LEVERAGING COMMUNICATION:

- The **Escazú Agreement and Aarhus Convention** both recognise the **right to environmental information**. States should ratify these frameworks and effectively implement the right to information.
- States should also strengthen their institutions and communication efforts to facilitate access to reliable information, including through mechanisms **facilitating access to reliable scientific information** such as those of the IPCC and IPBES, making them accessible to the general public.
- States could recognise **local environmental projects and biosphere reserves as unique platforms for engaging local communities**, fostering dialogue, and providing solutions-oriented engagement with environmental issues.
- States should also implement efforts to **tackle the digital divide** as a key lever to promote access to reliable information by prioritizing digital inclusion, reducing internet blackouts, streamlining regulatory frameworks, and adopting Indigenous-centered approaches.

PROMOTING LITERACY INITIATIVES AND RESEARCH:

- States should implement and facilitate measures to **empower citizens, policy makers and decision-makers to build resilience** and enable them distinguish between trustworthy and misleading information.
- States should also invest in **research particularly in the Global South** to better understand the tactics, mechanisms and means of climate and environmental disinformation, public opinion forming and access to reliable information.

MANDATING ADVERTISING MARKET TRANSPARENCY:

- States should implement regulatory frameworks **mandating transparency across the ad supply chain**, and implementing policies that require **disclosure of ad placements and revenue flows**. This includes knowing your customer principles and URL-level data access and financial reporting by ad creators.

CLEAR REPORTING GUIDELINES FOR COMPANIES:

- To prevent greenwashing and ensure accuracy in environmental claims, States should establish **clear reporting guidelines for companies, including mandatory carbon disclosure**.
- This should also include mandating **disclosure of industry lobbying and funding flows**.

WAY FORWARD

The successful development and implementation of effective regulatory and policy frameworks to strengthen information integrity on climate change and other environmental issues requires **stronger cross-sector cooperation**, leveraging existing coordination mechanisms, such as the **Global Initiative on Information Integrity on Climate Change** and the **Partnership for Information and Democracy** to coordinate actions among governments, civil society, platforms, researchers, and international organizations.

It also requires mainstreaming the issue of information integrity as integral for environmental protection and fighting climate change in incorporating the issue and recognising the right to reliable information in **international negotiations such as G7, G20, and the COPs**.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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