Launch of the Massive Open Online Course
on Information and Elections in the Digital Era

22 August 2022

Dear electoral practitioners, members of the electoral commissions, civil society organizations, media representatives, journalists, and all interested in contributing to the strengthening of democratic institutions and elections:

We are pleased to inform you that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas has developed a free Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on *Information and Elections in the Digital Era*.

This course is aimed at electoral practitioners and key electoral stakeholders, including electoral management bodies (EMBs), audiovisual regulatory bodies (ARBs), human rights and women rights civil society organization (CSOs), national and international electoral observers, political actors, academia and fact-checking organizations. It is also directed at media workers, media representatives and journalists, including community media and citizen journalists.

Divided into five modules, **the MOOC explores how new technologies affect elections and provides ideas for responding to these challenges.**

The course will start on **19 September 2022 and will last five weeks, until 23 October 2022**. It consists of one module per week, with each module lasting up to five hours in total. Please note that the course is asynchronous, meaning that there will be no live sessions and participants may access the course content on their own time throughout the five-week period.

It will be **available in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese**.

Registrations are now open on the following link:

> **https://journalismcourses.org/course/information-and-elections-in-the-digital-era/**

Upon completion of this course, participants will be able to (1) better understand how the new digital era, including internet, social media, and artificial intelligence affect electoral processes; (2) identify how key elements of electoral processes (such as human rights, freedom of expression, press freedom, right to privacy, right to political participation, etc.) apply in the digital era; (3)

understand the difference and dynamics between disinformation, misinformation, malinformation and hate speech in the context of electoral processes; (4) recognize the main strategies and techniques used to spread disinformation and the targets within the electoral cycle; and (5) be familiar with multi-stakeholder responses and lessons-learned on how to contribute to a transparent and inclusive online ecosystem.

This free MOOC, organized in partnership with the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas, is part of UNESCO and UNDP's efforts to address new challenges facing electoral processes and all stakeholders in the context of rapid technological advances. It is also a continuation of both organizations' work in the area of peace promotion and strengthening of democratic institutions.
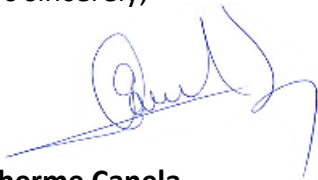
Please find attached a short description of the MOOC modules and a flyer advertising the course. We would be very grateful if you could circulate this information among your networks.

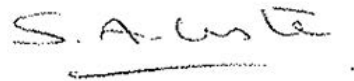Please note that participants who successfully complete the course will receive a certificate of completion.

If you require further information about the course, please contact:

- University of Texas: Mallary Tenore; email: mallary.tenore@utexas.edu
- UNESCO: Namara Burki; email: n.burki@unesco.org
- UNDP: Valdemar Christensen; email: valdemar.christensen@undp.org

Yours sincerely,

Guilherme Canela
Chief of the Freedom of Expression
Safety of Journalists' Section, UNESCO

Sarah Lister
Head of Governance
Bureau of Policy and Programme Support,
United Nations Development Programme

Rosental Calmon Alves
Director of the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas
University of Texas at Austin

Annex: description of the MOOC

Module 1 – The new information paradigm and elections *(September 19 – 25, 2022)*

Elections constitute a pivotal moment in democracies and provide citizens with an opportunity to choose their political representatives who will make critical decisions on the present and future of a given country. While the digital era has initially brought great opportunities for voters and candidates, social media poses new challenges for freedom of expression, safety of citizens, candidates and journalists as well as for the access to information. This module will provide you with a thorough overview of the New Information Paradigm and its impact on democratic elections when information sharing throughout the electoral cycle move online.

Module 2 - Disinformation, misinformation, and hate speech *(September 26 – October 2, 2022)*

In this module you will learn the differences between disinformation, misinformation and malinformation and why we no longer use the term "fake news." We will also analyze the human drivers behind misleading content and how hate speech impacts the electoral and governance processes. We will discuss electoral-related violence, in particular against women and journalists.

Module 3 - The impact of online harmful practices on the electoral cycle and tools to tackle them *(October 3 – 9, 2022)*

In this module we will review the diverse strategies and techniques used to spread dis-, mis- and malinformation. We will talk about the main targets of disinformation within the electoral cycle, and about the different responses to tackle disinformation – based on good practices and lessons learned on various continent, and in using tools such as artificial intelligence.

Module 4 – Focus on preventive measures to tackle harmful practices *(October 10 – 16, 2022)*

In this module we will start examining some of the preventive measures available to electoral stakeholders to tackle disinformation, misinformation and malinformation during electoral processes in relation to the electoral cycle: such as capacity building; promotion of dialogue and social cohesion; public information campaigns; and media information literacy. It will also cover emerging regulatory attempts to prevent harmful content from spreading online during elections.

Module 5 – Multi-stakeholder engagement and corrective measures to contribute to a transparent and inclusive online ecosystem *(October 17 – 23, 2022)*

In this module we will continue addressing the different ways to tackle harmful practices during elections through a multi-stakeholder engagement for the identification, fact-checking and monitoring measures; corrective measures; or containing corrective measures and regulatory and non-regulatory measures. These aim at contributing to a transparent and inclusive online ecosystem.