Press Statement
Ministry of Justice & Police and UNDP
63rd Commemoration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

December 10, 2011

Theme: “Human Rights and Social Media”

Following the Second World War in which citizens of numerous states suffered a violent death due to their race or religion, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was established on December 10, 1948. Internationally, Human Rights Day is celebrated on this day and this year marks the 63rd commemoration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The theme for 2011 is “human rights and social media”.

From 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations and its member states, was applied with regard to the compliance to, and acknowledgment of human rights. This document includes thirty civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. These rights have been accepted by the international community as a common goal.

A Human Right is a right that is inherent to all people. All people of the world are entitled to these rights notwithstanding their race, gender, religion, social status etc. But people can only fully enjoy these rights if they are aware of them.

The State as accountable entity with regard to the violation of human rights also has the obligation to promote human rights. This entails introduction of the protection of human rights within the policy to be conducted. Promotion of human rights involves making people aware of their rights. The awareness process can be realized in various ways such as the inclusion in the curriculum of all education facilities.
Not only our government but all Inter Governmental Organizations (IGOs) and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) currently contribute to the awareness process within the Surinamese society. Within this process, it is essential to reach a large group of people in a short period of time.

Mankind today, both young and old, are increasingly making use of modern communication tools. In this digital era, anything we can think about has to do with ICT and Social Media. People communicate via mobile telephone, they ping with each other and they browse on the Internet. With Internet, we refer to the various websites such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, also known as the Social Media.

What is Social Media? Social Media has to do with all information which can be sent or received on-line via a mobile telephone, the Internet and all other ways of communication. The most extensive way of informing people is via Social Media. We all know the many positive ways of obtaining knowledge and gathering information using internet. In addition to this positive side of the Social Media, we also know a negative side of the Social Media. There are also various gossip websites where people ‘trash each other’ in a painfully negative manner. Our pursuit is to focus on the positive sides of Social Media. Social Media can also be a very constructive way to be interactively involved with each other.

The United Nations as the largest international organization launched a social media campaign to encourage people to become more involved in the global human rights movement. The world is in transformation. The year two thousand eleven (2011) has identified itself as an era in which the power of the social media took an unexpected flight. Inspired by global events of the past months, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, remarked during the start of the Social Media campaign on December 1, 2011: “Our social media human rights campaign focuses on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and aims to help more people know, demand and defend human rights.”

By using Social Media an increasing number of people can know, demand and defend their rights in a relatively affordable, easy and accessible manner.

The office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights initiated an on-line discussion on Facebook and Twitter called “30 days and 30 rights” on November 10, counting down the days till December 10, 2011. The High Commissioner for Human Rights will host a worldwide human rights dialogue on the eve of Human Rights Day which can be seen and heard worldwide via the web.

Navi Pillay further stated: “Today, as in the past, editorial and financial factors – as well as access – determine whether or not protests, and repression of protests, are televised or reported in newspapers around the world.”
“But, wherever it happens, you can now guarantee it will be tweeted on Twitter, posted on Facebook, broadcast on YouTube, and uploaded on to the Internet. Governments no longer hold the ability to monopolize the dissemination of information and censor what it says.”

Governments can now also choose to use social media to meet their international obligation, namely the promotion of human rights by following the example of the UN. Our government, together with the UNDP, will examine how society can be made more aware of their basic human rights through use of social media.