

Outcomes:

In general, participation was brisk. A consensus emerged that Canada does have a unique and important role to play in supporting free and independent media in the Asia Pacific region as part of a broader agenda to strengthen human rights and democratic development. It was noted, however, that in several respects, the Canadian media experience was limited in the extent to which it could be used as a model for free and independent media. As one participant put it, "In Canada we are trying to protect a culture of democracy from a culture of monolithic thought, whereas [in a number of Asian countries], they are trying to introduce a culture of democracy into a culture of monolithic thought." But, as another participant said, there is much Canada can do to "nurture the process and protect from abuses."

It was suggested by several participants that since much of Canada's relations with the Asia Pacific region take the form of business contacts, representatives from business should be included in subsequent discussions on this topic.

Political support among Canadians was identified as a critical element to enable Canada to successfully carry out a program of this kind. In order to achieve this, it was agreed that Canadian media coverage of the Asia Pacific region needed to be enhanced, in terms of its quantity, focus and depth.

The day's discussions culminated in list of specific recommendations on how Canadian government, journalists', and civil society organizations can proceed in supporting free and independent media in the Asia Pacific region. (see attached Policy Options).