STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE GHANA JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION (GJA), ALBERT KWABENA DWUMFOUR, AT A PRESS CONFERENCE ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2026 AT THE GHANA INTERNATION PRESS CENTRE

The National Executive

Colleagues of the media

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

The National Executive of the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) expresses its sincere appreciation for your continued support and extensive coverage of the Association's programmes and press conferences. Your commitment and cooperation have been invaluable to our collective efforts to effectively discharge our constitutional mandate. We are particularly grateful for accepting our invitation once again and for your continued partnership and support.

The GJA welcomes you to this press conference, which provides an important opportunity for us to address some critical developments concerning the media industry, press freedom, constitutional reforms, the safety of journalists in the discharge of their professional duties and a raging national issue.

As the umbrella body representing journalists in Ghana, the GJA remains committed to protecting the interests of media practitioners, advancing media freedom, promoting professionalism and advocating policies that create an enabling environment for a vibrant, independent and sustainable media industry.

Today, we wish to address four important matters. **I begin with**…

1. THE GH₵10 MILLION MEDIA DEVELOPMENT FUND

The Ghana Journalists Association is delighted by the announcement of a GH₵10 million Media Development Fund by President John Dramani Mahama, which has subsequently been captured

in the 2027 Budget Statement and Economic Policy presented to Parliament by the Minister for Finance, Dr Cassiel Ato Forson.

We consider this a significant and welcome development for the Ghanaian media industry and wish to commend President Mahama and his government for taking concrete steps towards fulfilling the commitment to support the development and sustainability of the media.

The announcement represents an important demonstration of recognition of the indispensable role of the media in strengthening our democracy, promoting accountability, informing citizens and advancing national development.

For far too long, the media industry has operated under considerable financial, technological and professional constraints. Media organisations continue to grapple with high operational costs, changing business models, declining advertising revenues, inadequate infrastructure and the growing demands of the digital media environment.

Journalists, on the other hand, require continuous professional development, specialised training, improved working conditions and the necessary tools to respond to the increasingly complex demands of modern journalism.

The consequences of these challenges extend beyond individual media organisations and journalists. They have implications for the quality of journalism, the sustainability of media institutions and, ultimately, the ability of the media to effectively discharge their constitutional responsibilities.

It is against this background that the GJA has consistently advocated deliberate and sustainable interventions to strengthen the media industry.

We are therefore particularly encouraged that President Mahama's commitment is translating into a concrete policy intervention through the allocation announced in the 2027 Budget.

The GJA and, indeed, the wider media fraternity are happy about this decision. We see the proposed Fund as an important opportunity to invest in the future of journalism in Ghana.

We envisage a Fund that will support capacity building, professional training, research and innovation, digital transformation, media development and initiatives that will strengthen the institutional and operational capacity of media organisations.

We are equally encouraged by President Mahama's decision to extend the appeal for support to Corporate Ghana. This is particularly commendable because the development of a strong, independent and sustainable media industry should not be the responsibility of government alone.

The private sector, corporate institutions, development partners and other stakeholders have an important role to play in supporting an industry whose work contributes directly to transparency, accountability, investor confidence, good governance and national development.

We therefore applaud the President for encouraging Corporate Ghana to contribute to the Fund. We urge businesses, corporate institutions and other well-meaning organisations to respond positively to this call.

Supporting the media is not an act of charity. It is an investment in democracy, accountability, an informed citizenry and the stability of our nation.

However, while celebrating this important development, we wish to emphasise that the success of the Fund will depend largely on its design, governance and implementation.

As we await the modalities for its operationalisation next year, the GJA expects a transparent, inclusive and accountable framework that will guarantee equitable access to the Fund and ensure that its resources are deployed towards clearly defined media development objectives.

We believe that the Association and other relevant media stakeholders must be adequately involved in the processes leading to the establishment of the Fund's governance and implementation structures.

The Fund must be insulated from partisan political considerations and must not become an instrument for rewarding media organisations or journalists based on their perceived political leanings or editorial positions.

Its administration must be guided by fairness, transparency, professionalism and the collective interest of the media industry.

We also encourage government to consider the GH₵10 million allocation as a foundation for a sustainable media development financing arrangement that can attract further contributions from Corporate Ghana and other partners.

Our expectation is that the Fund will grow beyond the initial allocation and become a dependable mechanism for supporting the long-term development of the Ghanaian media.

President Mahama has made an important commitment. Government has taken a significant step towards fulfilling it. We commend this effort and look forward to the timely implementation of the initiative.

The GJA will remain constructively engaged with government and all relevant stakeholders to ensure that the Fund delivers meaningful and measurable benefits to journalists and media organisations across the country.

2. CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW: GJA OPPOSES PROPOSALS THAT THREATEN MEDIA INDEPENDENCE

Colleagues, the second issue we wish to address concerns the ongoing constitutional review process and specifically, some of the recommendations and proposals relating to media freedom, the National Media Commission and the independence of state-owned media.

Colleagues, you may be aware of the ongoing process to review the 1992 Constitution. After the Prof H. Kwasi Prempeh's Constitution Review Committee had finished its work and submitted its report, the Government issued a Position Paper on the report and thereafter set up an

implementation committee to continue the review process. In its Position Paper, the Government rejected entirely the recommendations made by the Prof Prempeh Committee on the National Media Commission (NMC) and made its own recommendations. We find some of the recommendations made by the Government on the NMC very troubling, and today, we will address one of them. In the coming days, we shall address the other concerns under Chapter 12, as well as Article 55(11) and 55(12)

One of the concerns we have is on Article 168 which is headed: APPOINTMENT OF BOARD MEMBERS OF STATE-OWNED MEDIA. That article provides: The Commission shall appoint the chairmen and other members of the governing bodies of public corporations managing the state-owned media in consultation with the President. That means the Constitution gives the NMC the mandate to appoint the chairmen and members of the governing boards of the state-owned media. However, the Government does not want the NMC to do so and recommends the amendment of Article 168 to mandate the Ministry of Information or the Government office responsible for the state-owned media, and in the State Interests and Governance Authority (SIGA), to manage or supervise the state-owned media. The Government argues that the regulator should not be the one to manage or govern it.

The GJA strongly opposes the Government's Position on Article 168 because it would place the state-owned media dangerously under governmental control and undermine their independence. One of the functions of the NMC is to insulate the state-owned media from governmental control, but the Government's Position to place the state-owned media under its control would blur and blunt that function of the Commission. The Government's recommendation will also lead to censorship which the Constitution frowns upon in Article 162(2). Ultimately, the Government's Position will take Ghana back to the dark days of the past when editors and journalists of the state-owned media were fired, transferred or punished at will for the expression of their editorial opinion. This will heighten self-censorship within the state-owned media. This will make the state-owned media lose its critical voice. This is dangerous for the development and growth of our democracy. The GJA believes the status quo must be maintained, and that the NMC must discharge the function of appointing the chairmen and members of the governing board of the

state-owned media. We shall present this case to the Constitution Review Implementation Committee. We shall also make our position known to Government. We shall continue to address these matters in public engagements. We shall not shut up until this dangerous recommendation is shot down.

The independence of the media is not negotiable. It must be protected, strengthened and guaranteed for present and future generations.

3. SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS IN THE COURTS

Colleagues, the third issue concerns the disturbing incidents of alleged harassment, obstruction and physical attacks on journalists covering court proceedings in parts of the country.

The GJA is deeply concerned about what appears to be a growing pattern of hostility towards journalists carrying out their legitimate professional responsibilities within court premises.

We find it particularly disturbing that journalists who attend court to report on proceedings and matters of public interest should themselves become targets of intimidation, obstruction or physical assault.

The court is an important institution of our democracy. It represents justice, the rule of law and the protection of fundamental rights.

Journalists play an essential role in ensuring that the public is informed about judicial proceedings, particularly cases that have significant public interest and national implications.

Court reporting is a legitimate and important aspect of journalism. It promotes transparency, public understanding of the administration of justice and confidence in the judicial system.

Unfortunately, recent developments have raised serious questions about the safety of journalists undertaking this responsibility. The GJA has received reports of disturbing incidents at different courts.

At the Kwabenya Court, police officers allegedly brought canes to assault journalists who were present to cover court proceedings. At the Adenta Court, a JoyNews reporter was allegedly pushed down a staircase, sustaining physical injuries. And on Tuesday, November 24, 2026, another incident involving the obstruction of journalists in the discharge of their professional duties was reported at the Adabraka Court.

These incidents are unacceptable and must not be allowed to become normalised.

We are particularly concerned about reports that some police officers, rather than providing the necessary protection for journalists, have allegedly prevented them from capturing scenes and developments of legitimate public interest.

The GJA wishes to remind the Ghana Police Service that journalists are not adversaries of law enforcement officers. We are partners in the promotion of public accountability, the rule of law and democratic governance.

We recognise that courts have rules and restrictions governing photography, recording and access to certain proceedings. Journalists are expected to respect these rules. However, such restrictions must be clearly communicated and lawfully enforced. They must never become an excuse for intimidation, harassment or physical attacks on media practitioners.

The GJA therefore makes the following demands: **First,** we call on the Judicial Service and the leadership of the Judiciary to take immediate steps to address the safety concerns of journalists covering court proceedings**.** We urge the Chief Justice and relevant judicial authorities to engage the GJA and other media stakeholders to develop clear guidelines and protocols that will facilitate responsible court reporting while guaranteeing the safety and professional rights of journalists.

Second, we call on the Inspector-General of Police and the leadership of the Ghana Police Service to investigate the reported incidents and ensure that any officers found culpable are held accountable.

Third, we demand improved collaboration between the Judiciary, the Police and the GJA to establish clear arrangements for media access, safety and professional conduct within court premises.

Fourth, we call on media organisations to ensure that their reporters covering court proceedings are adequately briefed on court protocols and safety procedures.

While demanding protection for journalists, we also expect our members to conduct themselves professionally, respect lawful court directives and adhere to established standards of court reporting.

Let me emphasise that the GJA will not tolerate any attempt to intimidate, assault or obstruct journalists simply because they are performing their professional responsibilities.

We cannot celebrate judicial independence while ignoring the safety and independence of journalists who report on the administration of justice.

We therefore urge the relevant authorities to act decisively before these disturbing incidents escalate.

The safety of journalists in the courts is not a favour to the media. It is an essential requirement for transparency, accountability and the effective functioning of our democracy.

4. **RENT CONTROL AND THE AFFORDABILITY OF STUDENT ACCOMMODATION**

The Ghana Journalists Association is also concerned about the growing challenges surrounding rent increases and the affordability of accommodation in the country, particularly for students and their parents. While we acknowledge the important role of private investors in addressing the accommodation deficit, we believe that investment must go hand in hand with accountability and compliance with the law. The fact that an individual or institution has invested resources in providing accommodation does not exempt them from the provisions of the Rent Act. Section 10 of the Act provides for the assessment of rent, and landlords who seek increases must follow the

prescribed procedures and provide evidence of the costs and investments justifying such adjustments. We must distinguish between affordability and excessive pricing or exploitation. As development economist Fred Dzanku of the University of Ghana rightly illustrates, these are two different concerns requiring different policy responses, including targeted financial assistance, cost transparency, independent scrutiny and appropriate regulation.

We are particularly concerned about reports of significant increases in accommodation charges at public universities and privately operated student hostels without corresponding improvements in facilities and maintenance.

Figures cited during discussions indicate that some university accommodation charges increased from approximately GH¢3,842 in 2023 to GH¢5,820 in 2024 and GH¢7,000 in 2025, with a proposed GH¢8,080 for 2026. Concerns have also been raised about a proposed 26 per cent increase and the disagreements it generated among students. We believe university authorities must take students' concerns seriously, document their complaints and provide the necessary explanations for such increases. At the same time, private accommodation providers operating around university campuses must be held to applicable standards.

We propose the introduction or strengthening of standards for student hostels, including a classification system similar to the hotel star-rating system, to ensure that accommodation charges reflect the quality of facilities, maintenance and services provided.

The Association believes that the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission, working with the Rent Control Office and other relevant stakeholders, must urgently examine these concerns and develop practical measures to promote affordable, decent and properly regulated accommodation.

Students and their parents must not be left to bear unjustified financial burdens, while landlords and private investors must be allowed to recover legitimate investments within the framework of the law. The objective should not be to discourage private-sector participation but to ensure fairness, transparency, accountability and respect for existing regulations.

We therefore call for stronger collaboration among government, universities, Rent Control Office, private accommodation providers and student representatives to address the growing accommodation challenge. Access to education must not be undermined by the cost of securing decent accommodation, particularly as students transition from secondary to tertiary education. The interests of students, parents, landlords, investors and educational institutions must be balanced to ensure that accommodation remains accessible, reasonably priced and fit for purpose.

CONCLUSION

Colleagues, the four issues we have addressed today are connected by one fundamental principle: the need to protect and strengthen the media as an indispensable institution of our democracy and ensure that our rent laws are followed for the benefit of all.

The proposed GH¢10 million Media Development Fund presents an important opportunity to invest in the future of journalism and strengthen the capacity of media institutions and practitioners.

The ongoing constitutional review offers an opportunity to deepen the guarantees of media freedom and independence. It must not become a process through which existing constitutional safeguards are weakened.

Similarly, the safety of journalists must be guaranteed wherever they undertake their professional responsibilities, including within the courts of law.

The GJA will continue to engage government, the Judiciary, the Police, the private sector and all relevant stakeholders on these matters.

We will commend government when it takes positive steps to advance the interests of the media, just as we will speak firmly when policies, decisions or actions threaten press freedom, professional independence and the safety of journalists.

Our commitment is not to any political party, individual or institution. Our commitment is to the Ghanaian people, the Constitution and the principles of free, independent, responsible and sustainable journalism.

We believe that a stronger media means a stronger democracy. An independent media means a more accountable government. And a safe journalist means a better-informed society.

The GJA will not compromise on these principles.

The media must be supported, not suffocated; protected, not intimidated; and strengthened, not controlled.

Thank you for your attention.