

PRESS RELEASE

Potsdam, 3th September 2008

M100 Sanssouci Colloquium 2008

SHIFTING SPHERES OF INFLUENCE AND THE FUTURE OF EURASIA? WHAT ROLE WILL THE MEDIA PLAY?

The city of Potsdam together with the Institute for Strategic Dialogue will be hosting the fourth annual M100 Sanssouci Colloquium: The East-West Media Bridge in Potsdam on 5th September 2008.

Entitled **SHIFTING SPHERES OF INFLUENCE AND THE FUTURE OF EURASIA? WHAT ROLE WILL THE MEDIA PLAY?**, this year's Colloquium is set to continue successfully building bridges between the European media and their colleagues in other parts of the world. The 2008 conference will be focussing on the countries of wider **Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia**. It will ask how their independence is affected by shifting spheres of influence and pressures from the world's major powers. This will be particularly topical in the light of international concern over the conflict in Georgia and its aftermath.

During three working sessions senior members of the media from **Western Europe** will be joined by colleagues from **Russia, Georgia, Ukraine** and the **Central Asian and Caucasian Republics**. The Georgia conflict has had widespread international repercussions and will be a major feature of the exchanges. But the wider politics of Eurasia and the independence of the countries in this vast region will also be discussed and participants will assess the impact that their reporting has on mutual understanding of the underlying issues.

The chairman of the working sessions, **John Lloyd**, senior columnist of the *The Financial Times* will briefly summarise the Working Group discussions at the opening of the plenary session which will be open to a wider public audience. This will be followed by an important panel discussion, chaired by BBC World's Chief Newsanchor, **Nik Gowing**, ranging from the lessons to be drawn from the conflict in the Caucasus to the limits of media freedom in the age of terrorism. The panel will consider the geopolitical implications of events in Georgia and the influence that media coverage has had over perceptions of the situation. It will also discuss how far censorship is justified in the interests of national

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security, and where, in free societies and in countries in transition, the fine line is drawn between free speech and censorship.

The Plenary Session will be followed by the annual **M100 Media Prize ceremony**. This year's keynote speaker will be **Lord (David) Owen**, former UK Foreign Secretary and EU Peace Negotiator in the former Yugoslavia. He has chosen to speak on: *Great Power Realpolitik: Kosovo 1999 to Georgia 2008*.

The **Media Prize** will then be awarded to **Ingrid Betancourt** in recognition of her courage and her commitment to freedom and human rights. Unfortunately she is unable to attend in person, but the audience will be able to see a moving video address which she has recorded for M100.

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