



From: Broadcasting Board of Governors  
Date: April 6, 2017  
Subject: **Minutes of the BBG Meeting of April 6, 2017**

The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) met today in the Cohen Building (BBG headquarters) in Washington, D.C. The meeting was open for public attendance as seating capacity allowed and for public observation via streaming on the BBG website.

The meeting was attended by the following Board members:

Chairman Kenneth Weinstein  
Governor Leon Aron  
Governor Ryan Crocker  
Governor Michael Kempner  
Governor Karen Kornbluh  
Acting Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Bruce Wharton

Governor Jeffrey Shell was not in attendance. Other persons in attendance are listed at the end of these minutes.

The agenda of the meeting is set forth in Attachment 1.

Chairman Weinstein called the meeting to order and noted that the meeting was being held in compliance with the Government in the Sunshine Act and streamed live over the Internet at the BBG website.

The Chairman began with some comments on the current Board structure. He noted that on January 24, 2017, the Board voted to name him Chairman and delegated to me the full authorities of the Board Chair under the BBG Board By-Laws. He expressed his gratitude to Jeff Shell for his dedication and leadership of the Board and noted that he was critical to the transformation of the agency. He stated that he will continue to work with Board members and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) John Lansing, to maximize BBG's impact and to advance U.S. foreign policy priorities and national interest. He then thanked the Board, CEO Lansing, and the network heads for the seamless transition.

Chairman Weinstein took a moment to comment on the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 ("NDAA"). He stated that, on December 23, 2016, President Obama signed the 2017 NDAA into law, with a signing statement – as is common for large legislation. He noted that the signing statement had raised potential constitutional concerns regarding the NDAA and the Executive Branch appointment and removal authorities. He added that, out of an abundance of caution, the Department of Justice affirmed that the current Board is enduring and

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will continue to serve alongside the current CEO until a CEO is confirmed by the Senate and appointed by the President.

The Chairman announced the BBG's new Presidential Landing Team, Matt Ciepielowski and Matt Schuck, who joined the agency on January 23. He said they are working with the Board, CEO, BBG senior management, and other relevant agency staff to learn about BBG operations and management in order to ensure an open and transparent transition with the Trump Administration. He added that the Team has been invaluable assets to the agency, making the transition seamless. He also added that the Team's attendance helps them learn the important work the Board is leading.

Chairman Weinstein reported on two unexpected deaths in the BBG family over the past month. He announced that, on March 4, Oscar Barcelo, the International Broadcasting Bureau's (IBB) Regional Marketing Officer for Latin America, had passed away. Mr. Barcelo worked closely with Voice of America's (VOA) Latin America Division, VOA management, and with IBB Office of Marketing. Mr. Barcelo's work extended the Latin America weekly audience to nearly 60 million in 2016 – a major driver of VOA's large jump in reach last year. The Chairman added that, on March 23, Ner Castillo, an equipment mechanic foreman at the Tinang site of the IBB's Philippines Transmitting Station, had passed away due to an on-the-job accident. Mr. Castillo had faithfully worked with the U.S. Government for 32 years. Mr. Castillo maintained the Philippine Station's antennas that transmit BBG programming to listeners in China, Russia, and southern and eastern Asia. The Chairman then asked for a moment of silence for Oscar Barcelo and Ner Castillo.

Following the prior Chairman's tradition, Chairman Weinstein segued to the ongoing threats to BBG journalists around the world by highlighting the following incidents: 1) In Vietnam, Radio Free Asia (RFA) videographer Nguyen Van Hoa was still being detained for "abusing democratic freedoms," and has not been able to contact his family or attorneys; 2) VOA Kurdish Service's reporter, Ahmed Ghafur Hakim, was detained and had his equipment and press credentials seized while trying to cover an incident in Erbil, Iraq, but was later released with no explanation for his detention; 3) In Belarus, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's (RFE/RL) reporter Halina Abakunchyk was among several journalists detained by police in Belarus on March 12 while reporting on protests against a controversial tax on the unemployed; 4) RFE/RL President Thomas Kent traveled to Kyrgyzstan and met with Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambaev on March 30 after learning that the President had filed two defamation lawsuits against RFE/RL'S Kyrgyz Service for reports that included quotes from Kyrgyzstan's opposition Ata-Meken (fatherland) Party which were made at a widely reported press conference following the arrest of the Party's leader; 5) two RFE/RL correspondents in southern Russia were attacked on March 28 while they were on assignment to cover a demonstration in an incident that appears to have been at least partially orchestrated by local police; and 6) the trial of Crimean journalist Mykola Semena, an RFE/RL contributor who had been indicted on separatism-related charges by the Russian authorities controlling the Peninsula for an article he wrote criticizing Moscow's seizure of Crimea. On behalf of the Board, Chairman Weinstein condemned all these actions against BBG journalists, which are unconscionable violations of international norms.

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Moving to Board business, Chairman Weinstein stated that the presence of five or more Governors satisfies the Board's quorum requirement, permitting the Board to conduct business based on majority vote. He said that the Board had received by email materials for the consent agenda on March 23. He added that he did not receive comments from any Governors.

The Chairman described the six items on the consent agenda for the Board's consideration: draft minutes of the November 30, 2016 meeting of the plenary Board; a resolution honoring VOA's 75th anniversary; a resolution honoring VOA's Russian Service 70th Anniversary; a resolution honoring VOA's Somali Service 10th anniversary; a resolution honoring RFE/RL's Afghan Service 15th anniversary; and a resolution honoring Middle East Broadcasting Networks' (MBN) Radio Sawa 15th anniversary. Governor Kempner moved for adoption of the consent agenda. Governor Aron seconded. Without objection, the consent agenda was unanimously adopted by the Board.

In accordance with the Board's prior protocol for allowing members of the public to speak at meetings, the Chairman invited Ann Noonan, Committee for U.S. International Broadcasting, to address the Board for three minutes.

At the Chairman's invitation, CEO Lansing began his report with an update on the strategic cooperation of the International Coordinating Committee (ICC) of the BBG. CEO Lansing said that the ICC was established 18 months ago, and its purpose is to organize BBG networks to operate as efficiently as possible, eliminating redundancies and to identify key areas for cooperation in parts of the world that are most closely aligned with U.S. foreign policy, including China and North Korea, Violent Extremism in the Middle East, and Russia's "weaponization of information." At CEO Lansing's request, RFE/RL President Tom Kent provided an update on the new 24/7 Russian-language Current Time network, including the various topics and issues had been covered by the network. The CEO announced VOA's new four-part interactive multimedia report and video series on Boko Haram's terrorist campaign in Nigeria titled, "Boko Haram – Terror Unmasked," and invited VOA Director Amanda Bennett to describe this new project. The CEO noted a key area of focus for him, and for the ICC, is to build better collaborative relationships across BBG's network and asked RFA President Libby Liu to offer a report on RFA's collaboration with other BBG networks. The CEO also noted the BBG's emphasis on using accurate reporting and journalism to counter the violent narratives of ISIS and similar violent extremist groups, and the success of the Middle East Broadcasting Networks' (MBN) "Raise Your Voice" project, a multimedia initiative to counter the propaganda spread by ISIS and to provide a platform for citizens to discuss and engage on topics that underlie the appeal of extremist ideology. He added that MBN has created a new digital initiative following the "Raise Your Voice" model called, "Maghreb Voices," and invited MBN President Brian Conniff to describe the new initiative. Finally, the CEO said that, while the U.S. and Cuba had normalized the relationship, the Island still faces serious challenges when it comes to press and information freedom. To better understand these challenges, the CEO said that BBG and the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB) had commissioned an independent review of press freedom in Cuba and asked OCB Director Malule Gonzalez to briefly highlight some key findings from the qualitative study.

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CEO Lansing then announced that the BBG had begun the nomination process for this year's Nathanson Public Diplomacy Scholarship. He noted that the Nathanson Scholarship, provided by former BBG Chairman Marc Nathanson and his wife, Jane Nathanson, identifies emerging leaders and middle management officials in areas related to public diplomacy and international media, and funds their participation in executive training at the nonpartisan Aspen Institute. At the CEO's request, Chief of Staff Rob Fallon described the Socrates Seminars which will be held from July 7 to July 10, 2017 in Aspen, Colorado.

In closing, CEO Lansing reported that, on March 13, the President issued a new Executive Order on a comprehensive plan for reorganizing the Executive Branch. He said, under the Executive Order, the head of each Agency is required to submit to Office of Management and Budget an agency plan to "reorganize governmental functions and eliminate unnecessary agencies . . . , components of agencies, and agency programs," in order to improve the "efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of agencies." He stated that the BBG takes this Executive Order seriously and is treating it as such. He commented that it is a good opportunity for the BBG to highlight some of the reforms it had implemented in the past 18 months. He said that his team, including the Landing Team, will be working with the Board to develop an efficient and impactful plan.

At the Chairman's invitation, Acting Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Bruce Wharton gave brief comments on the great working relationship between the BBG and his office, the U.S. Department of State's continued support for the statutorily mandated firewall that protect the BBG's editorial independence, and the close collaborations between the BBG and the Department's bureaus to advance U.S. foreign policy goals. He added that he will continue to advocate for BBG staff to have access to key U.S. foreign policy meetings. He expressed his appreciation for BBG's positive influence to affiliates abroad because of its credibility and independence, and for being a model for freedom of expression and free media. On a final note Ambassador Wharton thanked CEO Lansing, with the support of the Board, for his leadership in improving the quality of BBG's product and making the agency more vibrant, responsive, and forward minded such as the 24/7 Russian-language Current Time network and anti-ISIS programs, and expressed interest in programming stream for Syria. He commended CEO Lansing for positioning the BBG to counter state and non-state actors of disinformation around the globe.

Chairman Weinstein stated that the next Board meeting is scheduled to be held at BBG headquarters in Washington, D.C., on June 14, 2017. He said that the Governors were encouraged to give input regarding other topics that they may like to see addressed at the next meeting.

The Broadcasting Board of Governors agreed to the following decision elements (all decisions were adopted by a unanimous vote unless otherwise indicated):

1. Adoption of Minutes of November 30, 2016 Board Meeting. The Board adopted the minutes of the November 30, 2016 meeting of the plenary Board as set forth in Attachment 2.

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2. Resolution Honoring Voice of America's 75th Anniversary. The Board adopted the resolution honoring Voice of America's 75th anniversary as set forth in Attachment 3.
3. Resolution Honoring Voice of America's Russian Service 70th Anniversary. The Board adopted the resolution honoring Voice of America's Russian Service 70th anniversary as set forth in Attachment 4.
4. Resolution Honoring Voice of America's Somali Service 10th Anniversary. The Board adopted the resolution honoring Voice of America's Somali Service 10th anniversary as set forth in Attachment 5.
5. Resolution Honoring Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Afghan Service 15th Anniversary. The Board adopted the resolution honoring Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Afghan Service 15th anniversary as set forth in Attachment 6.
6. Resolution Honoring Middle East Broadcasting Networks' Radio Sawa 15th Anniversary. The Board adopted the resolution honoring Middle East Broadcasting Networks' Radio Sawa 15th anniversary as set forth in Attachment 7.

### Other Attendees:

The following persons were also present during all or part of the meeting: BBG CEO and Director John Lansing; Chief of Staff Rob Fallon; Interim General Counsel and Board Secretary David Kligerman; Director of Board Operations Oanh Tran; Director of Congressional Affairs Ellona Fritschie; Interim Chief Financial Officer John Barkhamer; Director of Global Communications and Office of Public Affairs Nasserie Carew; Director of the Office of Internet Freedom Nnake Nweke; IBB Deputy Director Jeffrey Trimble; Public Affairs Specialist Chelsea Milko; Director of Research Sonja Gloeckle; Associate Director for Program Support Gary Thatcher; Director of Security Frederick Lang; Supervisory of Physical Security Thomas Allen; Public Affairs/Internal Communications Adeyemi Jimason; White House Liaison to the BBG Matt Ciepielowski; Special Communications Advisor to the BBG Matt Schuck; Amanda Bennett, VOA Director; Sandy Sugawara, VOA Deputy Director; Kelu Chao, VOA Associate Director for Language Programming; Jim Tunnessen, VOA Chief Digital Officer; Maria "Malule" Gonzalez, Director of the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB); Thomas Kent, RFE/RL President; Ben Herman, RFE/RL General Counsel; Pamela Goodnow, RFE/RL Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer; Laura Lew, RFE/RL Risk and Compliance Officer; Anastasia Kolobrodova, RFE/RL Project Officer; Libby Liu, RFA President; Bernadette Burns, RFA General Counsel; Brian Conniff, MBN President; and Nicholas Snyder, Senior Assistant, Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy & Public Affairs.

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Kenneth Weinstein  
Chairman

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Witnessed:

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David Kligerman  
Interim Board Secretary

Attachments:

1. Agenda for April 6, 2017 Board Meeting
2. Minutes of November 30, 2016 Board Meeting
3. Resolution Honoring Voice of America's 75th Anniversary
4. Resolution Honoring Voice of America's Russian Service 70th Anniversary
5. Resolution Honoring Voice of America's Somali Service 10th Anniversary
6. Resolution Honoring Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Afghan Service 15th Anniversary
7. Resolution Honoring Middle East Broadcasting Networks' Radio Sawa 15th Anniversary

# Minutes of April 6, 2017 Meeting

ATTACHMENT 1

## BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS April 2017 Meeting Agenda (ALL MEETINGS ARE AT COHEN BUILDING, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.)

Thursday, April 6

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### 1:00 – 2:00 Broadcasting Board of Governors' Open Meeting

- A. Welcome Chairman / Chairman Remarks
- B. Consent Agenda
  - Draft Minutes of November 30, 2016 Meeting
  - Draft Resolution Honoring Voice of America's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
  - Draft Resolution Honoring Voice of America's Russian Service 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
  - Draft Resolution Honoring Voice of America's Somali Service 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
  - Draft Resolution Honoring Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Afghan Service 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
  - Draft Resolution Honoring Middle East Broadcasting Networks' Radio Sawa 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
- C. CEO & Director's Report
- D. Other Items for Consideration at Next Board Meeting

## Minutes of April 6, 2017 Meeting

### ATTACHMENT 2

From: Broadcasting Board of Governors  
Date: November 30, 2016  
Subject: **Minutes of the BBG Meeting of November 30, 2016**

The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) met today in the Cohen Building (BBG headquarters) in Washington, D.C. The meeting was open for public attendance as seating capacity allowed and for public observation via streaming on the BBG website.

The meeting was attended by the following Board members:

Chairman Jeffrey Shell  
Governor Matthew Armstrong  
Governor Leon Aron  
Governor Ryan Crocker  
Governor Michael Kempner  
Governor Karen Kornbluh  
Governor Kenneth Weinstein  
Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Richard Stengel

Other persons in attendance are listed at the end of these minutes.

The agenda of the meeting is set forth in Attachment 1.

Chairman Shell called the meeting to order and noted that the meeting was being held in compliance with the Government in the Sunshine Act and streamed live over the Internet at the BBG website.

The Chairman began with some comments on the transition from the Obama Administration to the next Administration. He stated that BBG stands ready to engage with the President-elect's team to ensure BBG's professional and efficient transition into the next Administration. He commented on BBG's achievements during the Obama Administration and affirmed that BBG will continue the good work in the Trump Administration.

Chairman Shell announced the pending legislation that would accompany the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 ("NDAA") and noted that the proposed bill contemplates certain BBG reforms: creation of an Advisory Board that would not include the current BBG Board members; authorization that would give BBG Chief Executive Officer (CEO) full authorities; current CEO would continue to serve until the appointment of a Presidentially-appointed, Senate-confirmed CEO; future grantee Boards would be selected by the CEO, and that the Agency would have the authority to consolidate the grantees into a single legal entity.



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He expressed the importance of BBG's mission, especially its professional and independent journalism, and emphasized that the Firewall would remain in force under the proposed amendment, and the CEO would be required to uphold and abide by the Firewall. He said that, in his opinion, the pending legislation would likely pass by the Congress in the coming days, and wanted everyone to be aware of it. There followed brief comments from CEO Lansing regarding the importance of BBG's credibility as a source of independent news and information; from Under Secretary Stengel on the BBG's vital mission and the extraordinary leadership by Chairman Shell and CEO Lansing; and from individual Governors regarding their admirations and deep appreciation for the incredible and essential work of the BBG, and their continued support for the BBG as their appointments might cease after this meeting if the pending legislation passes. In closing, the Chairman said that if this were his last meeting, he had failed his goals of having ten members of the public speak at a Board meeting and not having to report on threats to the BBG journalists.

The Chairman segued to the ongoing threats to BBG journalists around the world. He noted that the Tajikistan Foreign Ministry revoked the accreditations of six Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) correspondents in Dushanbe, Tajikistan's capital city, after demanding that RFE/RL remove "within five minutes" a story on its website about the appointment of one of President Emomali Rahmon's daughters to a post in the foreign ministry. He added that the Foreign Ministry gave no explanation and its decision was distressing and totally unacceptable, and that this substantially impacts the RFE/RL operations in Tajikistan as accreditation is required for citizens to work for international media in the country. On behalf of the Board, the Chairman thanked the RFE/RL professionals in Tajikistan and urged them to continue their work with the Board's full endorsement. He then called on the Foreign Ministry to immediately restore the accreditation of our six journalists, and noted that the Board later will consider a resolution of support for RFE/RL's journalists in Dushanbe.

The Chairman also highlighted the following incidents involving other BBG's journalists. In Turkmenistan, RFE/RL Turkmen Service freelancer Saparmamed Nepeskuliev remains in prison and incommunicado while his colleague Soltan Achilova was attacked on October 25, attacked again on November 8, and a third time last Friday. Additionally, RFE/RL Turkmen Service correspondent, Rovshan Yazmuhammedov (who was previously detained by Turkmen officials in 2013) was summoned by police and questioned for several hours about his cooperation with RFE/RL in late October. In total, ten contributors to RFE/RL Turkmen Service have been attacked in a continuing government-inspired campaign while its website has been blocked since 2015, forcing readers to use other means to reach it. In Iraq, a Radio Farda freelancer, Rasool Mahmood was seriously injured on October 20 while reporting from the front lines of the Iraqi army's campaign to drive ISIS out of the city of Mosul. Mr. Mahmood was now in a hospital in Ankara, Turkey, where doctors are trying to save the sight in one of his eyes; a GOFUNDME campaign had been set-up to support Mr. Mahmood and his family. In Crimea, RFE/RL contributor Mykola Semena remains under house arrest in Russia-Annexed Simferopol and was prevented from leaving the peninsula to receive medical care.

On a happier note, Chairman Shell announced the release of Voice of America (VOA) Kurdish Service reporter Hatice Kamer, who was detained by Turkish authorities in Diyarbakir over the

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weekend on bogus charges. She was covering a mine accident when police confiscated her equipment and accused her of propagandizing against President Erdogan. On behalf of the Board, the Chairman called on Turkish authorities to put an end to the harassment of journalists in that country. He also condemned the threats to BBG's journalists, and those to all journalists, and called on local officials to hold those who are responsible accountable.

Moving to Board business, Chairman Shell stated that the presence of five or more Governors satisfies the Board's quorum requirement, permitting the Board to conduct business based on majority vote. He said that the Board had received by email materials for the consent agenda, and that later, the Board also received a resolution of support for RFE/RL's journalists in Dushanbe. He added that he did not receive comments from any Governors.

The Chairman described the three items on the consent agenda for the Board's consideration: draft minutes of the September 28, 2016 meeting of the plenary Board; a resolution for BBG meeting dates in 2017; and a resolution of support for RFE/RL's journalists in Dushanbe. Governor Armstrong moved for adoption of the consent agenda. Under Secretary Stengel seconded. Without objection, the consent agenda was unanimously adopted by the Board.

In accordance with the Board's prior protocol for allowing members of the public to speak at meetings, the Chairman invited Adam Clayton Powell III from University of Southern California to address the Board for three minutes. Governor Armstrong commented that he is the Secretary for the Public Diplomacy Council and expressed his gratitude for all the statements made by Mr. Powell III before the Board.

At the Chairman's invitation, CEO Lansing began his report with brief comments on the recent joint programming by both VOA and RFE/RL that has rapidly grown to a 24/7 Russian-language Current Time digital network. At CEO Lansing's request, RFE/RL President Tom Kent and VOA Director Amanda Bennett gave a progress report for Current Time, including the various topics and issues had been covered by the network. The CEO noted the importance of digital and asked Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN) President Brian Conniff to describe how social media platforms enabled MBN to engage audiences in the Middle East and obtain their reactions on post-U.S. Presidential elections.

CEO Lansing turned to the BBG's highest achievement award – 2016 David Burke Distinguished Journalism Awards. He noted that the winners from each of the five BBG networks were recognized for their courage, integrity, and professionalism. While the award presentation was scheduled for the next morning, the CEO invited the network heads to briefly speak about their individual winners.

The CEO announced the recent release of BBG's FY 2016 Performance and Accountability Report (PAR). He stated that the BBG's global weekly audience went from 226 million to 278 million, an increase of 52 million and the largest ever year-to-year increase in audience on all platforms. At the CEO's invitation, Jeff Trimble, head of our Office of Policy and Research, gave highlights on the PAR. There followed brief presentations from Ms. Bennett and Mr. Conniff on some of the impressive growth and performances in their respective areas.

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Governor Armstrong welcomed and introduced the new Executive Director for U.S. Advisory Commission for Public Diplomacy, Shawn Powers.

Governor Kempner then thanked the staff for their support and professionalism over the years. The Chairman expressed his gratitude to Chief of Staff Rob Fallon and to the Interim Management Team that led the Agency for a brief period which consisted of Andre Mendes, Suzie Carroll, and Rob Bole.

In closing, Chairman Shell stated that the next Board meeting is scheduled to be held at BBG headquarters in Washington, D.C., on March 23, 2017. He said that the Governors were encouraged to give input regarding other topics that they may like to see addressed at the next meeting.

The Broadcasting Board of Governors agreed to the following decision elements (all decisions were adopted by a unanimous vote unless otherwise indicated):

1. Adoption of Minutes of September 28, 2016. The Board adopted the minutes of the September 28, 2016 meeting of the plenary Board as set forth in Attachment 2.
2. Resolution for BBG Meeting Dates in 2017. The Board adopted the resolution for BBG meeting dates in 2017 as set forth in Attachment 3.
3. Resolution in Support of the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Correspondents in Tajikistan. The Board adopted the resolution in support of the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty correspondents in Tajikistan as set forth in Attachment 4.

Other Attendees:

The following persons were also present during all or part of the meeting: BBG CEO and Director John Lansing; Chief of Staff Rob Fallon; Interim General Counsel and Board Secretary Elizabeth Parish; Director of Board Operations Oanh Tran; Interim Chief Financial Officer John Barkhamer; Senior Advisor on Communications Nasserie Carew; Jeffrey Trimble, IBB Deputy Director; Laurie Moy, Writer-Editor (Multimedia); Nnake Nweke, Director of the Office of Internet Freedom; Amanda Bennett, Director of the Voice of America (VOA); Sandy Sugawara, VOA Deputy Director; Kelu Chao, VOA Associate Director for Language Programming; Bridget Serchak, VOA Director of Public Relations; Maria “Malule” Gonzalez, Director of the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB); Thomas Kent, President of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL); Ben Herman, RFE/RL General Counsel; Pamela Goodnow, RFE/RL Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer; Stephanie Schmidt, RFE/RL Budget Director; Libby Liu, President of Radio Free Asia (RFA); Bernadette Burns, RFA General Counsel; Brian Conniff, President of the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN); and Joshua Lipsky, Senior Advisor for BBG, Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy & Public Affairs.

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Jeffrey Shell  
Chairman



Broadcasting  
Board of  
Governors

## Minutes of April 6, 2017 Meeting

Witnessed:

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Elizabeth Parish  
Interim Board Secretary

Attachments:

1. Agenda for November 30, 2016 Board Meeting
2. Minutes of September 28, 2016 Board Meeting
3. Resolution for BBG Meeting Dates in 2017
4. Resolution in Support of the RFE/RL Correspondents in Tajikistan

## Minutes of April 6, 2017 Meeting

ATTACHMENT 3

### RESOLUTION HONORING THE 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE VOICE OF AMERICA

April 6, 2017

WHEREAS, the Voice of America (VOA) is the largest U.S. international media, funded through the generosity of the U.S. taxpayers, providing news and information in 47 languages to a measured weekly audience of 236 million people; and broadcast on its own facilities and those of over 2350 affiliated stations around the world;

WHEREAS, the VOA is committed to providing comprehensive coverage of the news and telling audience the truth, including America's story, and has covered seminal events in American and world history, from World War II, to the Cuban Missile crisis, civil rights, the Vietnam war, Watergate, the Cold War, the fight against global terrorism, and many other historic and critical moments;

WHEREAS, the VOA first aired in German, in February 1942 shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, with the words, "The news may be good or bad. We shall tell you the truth;"

WHEREAS, VOA exemplifies the principles of a free press; and in pursuit of a free press, VOA reporters and stringers have been killed, detained, harassed, or expelled from the country in which they are reporting;

WHEREAS, President John F. Kennedy spoke of VOA in the context of the 1946 United Nations General Assembly resolution stating that "Freedom of information is a fundamental human right," saying that "this is our touchstone as well, this is the code of the Voice of America ... we seek a free flow of information across national boundaries and oceans, across iron curtains and stone walls ... the Voice of America thus carries a heavy responsibility. Its burden of truth is not easy to bear;"

WHEREAS, Congress passed and President Ford signed into law the VOA Charter in 1976 that is still in use today, more than 40 years later, declaring that VOA will serve as a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news; VOA news will be accurate, objective and comprehensive; VOA will represent America, not any single segment of American society, and will therefore present a balanced and comprehensive project of significant American thought and institutions; and VOA will present the policies of the United States clearly and effectively, and will also present responsible discussions and opinion on these policies;

WHEREAS, President Ronald Reagan said of VOA in 1987, "To millions in closed societies, your broadcasts are ... the voice of truth. We do not think a mind can or should be imprisoned ... let us remember that many listeners, listeners in these closed societies, tune in to VOA at grave personal risk;"

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WHEREAS, President George W. Bush said, “Throughout its history, the Voice of America has applied the power of technology to the advance of liberty. It has used every means possible – shortwave, television, and now the Internet – to bypass the barriers of tyrants ... No one knows what new information technologies will be available sixty years from now, but two things we do know. First, that the Voice of America will find a way to use them, and second, through those means – though the means of delivery may change – the message never will ... It’s a message of freedom, and freedom is worth defending;”

WHEREAS, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, VOA is committed to producing content for digital, television and radio platforms that can be easily accessed by mobile phone and on social media, in addition to the traditional mediums of satellite, cable, and radio;

WHEREAS, in October 2016, VOA jointly launched with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty a new 24/7 Russian-language digital network *Current Time* that aims to provide audiences in Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Moldova, and elsewhere across Eastern Europe, that currently reaches dozens of media outlets in nine countries and continues to expand its reach, while provide factual news and real-time fact checking of false narratives;

WHEREAS, in 2016, VOA audiences increased by a record 50 million people per week to a total of 236 million, with the greatest audience increases in Indonesian and Spanish languages and in several African nations, and on social media in countries like Cambodia, and research surveys found that nearly 90% of users considered VOA’s programming trustworthy; and

WHEREAS, VOA is currently enhancing its modern, 24/7 digital-first newsroom; increasing the number of stories available across all 47 language services through a “One VOA” policy; strongly recommitting to telling America’s story around the world while expanding in-depth reporting on our country’s vibrant entrepreneurial culture, cutting-edge health, medicine and education systems as well as our vibrant American diaspora communities.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Broadcasting Board of Governors and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) that we celebrate and commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Voice of America.

## Minutes of April 6, 2017 Meeting

ATTACHMENT 4

### RESOLUTION HONORING THE 70<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF VOICE OF AMERICA'S RUSSIAN SERVICE

April 6, 2017

WHEREAS, the Voice of America (VOA) began broadcasting in Russian on February 17, 1947 to provide accurate, balanced and comprehensive news and information to the Russian-language audiences;

WHEREAS, VOA's Russian Service has served for decades as a vital communications link with the Russian people in support of freedom and democracy during the Cold War, and through the challenges Russia faces today;

WHEREAS, VOA's Russian Service has successfully adopted television, online, mobile and social media platforms to reach even greater numbers of Russian-language speaking people;

WHEREAS, VOA Russian is one of the leading source of news and information for Russians about United States policy, and expert analysis on Russia, Eurasia, the United States and the world;

WHEREAS, VOA Russian is a unique source of news and information for Russians about American society and its achievements in democratic governance, business, medicine, science, technology and the arts, which can serve as an inspiration and a model for Russia;

WHEREAS, VOA Russian remains a respected source of objective and accurate news and information about Russia, Eurasia, the United States and the world, with a major focus on human rights, religious and cultural rights, freedom of speech, and democratic values and practices;

WHEREAS, VOA's Russian Service broadcasts daily to millions of people in Russia, countries neighboring Russia and Russian speakers around the world; and

WHEREAS, VOA's Russian Service produces one hour daily live TV show *Current Time America* that is broadcast on the 24/7 Russian-language digital network Current Time that provides international and domestic news for the Russian-speaking population globally.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Broadcasting Board of Governors and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) that we celebrate and commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Voice of America's Russian Service.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Broadcasting Board of Governors and CEO commend and congratulate both the current and former members of the Voice of America's Russian Service for their dedication in serving the Russian people and fostering friendship and the open communication of information and ideas between them and the United States.

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ATTACHMENT 5

### RESOLUTION HONORING THE 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF VOICE OF AMERICA'S SOMALI SERVICE

April 6, 2017

WHEREAS, the Voice of America (VOA) began broadcasting in Somali on February 12, 2007 to provide accurate, balanced and comprehensive news and information to the Somali people;

WHEREAS, VOA's Somali Service has served for the last decade as a vital communications link with the Somali people in support of freedom and democracy during the last 10 years, during the years of Somalia's lawless years, and through the challenges Somalia faces today;

WHEREAS, VOA's Somali Service has successfully adopted web cast television, online, mobile and social media platforms to reach even greater numbers of Somalis;

WHEREAS, VOA Somali is a leading source of news and information for Somalis about United States policy, and expert analysis on Somalia, Arab countries, the United States and the world;

WHEREAS, VOA Somali is a unique source of news and information for Somalis about American society and its achievements in democratic governance, business, medicine, science, technology and the arts, which can serve as an inspiration and a model for Somalis;

WHEREAS, VOA Somali remains a respected source of objective and accurate news and information about Somalia and East Africa, many parts of diaspora including the United States and the rest of the world, with a major focus on human rights, social and cultural rights, freedom of speech, and democratic values and practices;

WHEREAS, VOA's Somali Service continues to broadcast daily to more than 20 million people in Somalia and Somali speakers in East Africa, Middle East and around the world; and

WHEREAS, VOA's Somali Service is among the leading international broadcasters in Somali and, surpassing its competitors with audience reach on Radio, Internet, weekly TV and mobile, with arguably the most popular and influential radio programs in the Somali language.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Broadcasting Board of Governors and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) that we celebrate and commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Voice of America's Somali Service.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Broadcasting Board of Governors and CEO commend and congratulate both the current and former members of the Voice of America's Somali Service for their dedication in serving the Somali people and fostering friendship and the open communication of information and ideas between them and the United States.



## Minutes of April 6, 2017 Meeting

ATTACHMENT 6

### RESOLUTION HONORING THE 15<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY'S AFGHAN SERVICE - RADIO AZADI

April 6, 2017

WHEREAS, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) launched Dari- and Pashto-language broadcasts to the people of Afghanistan on January 30, 2002, and will be celebrating the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of these programs in 2017;

WHEREAS, these broadcasts, known popularly as Radio Azadi, follow in the tradition of RFE/RL's original "Radio Free Afghanistan" broadcasts from 1985 to 1993, and are widely appreciated by the people of Afghanistan for its commitment to journalistic excellence and the vital public service it provides its audience on all platforms – radio, television, and digital media;

WHEREAS, RFE/RL's Radio Azadi is considered the most trustworthy source of local news and information in Afghanistan, and remains the most popular radio station in the country;

WHEREAS, Radio Azadi has gained a notable digital and social audience for its content, with 2.5 million followers and 3.8 million engaged users of its Dari- and Pashto-language Facebook pages and a 2016 monthly average of 1.64 million page views and 863,000 visits to its Dari- and Pashto-language website, [azadiradio.org](http://azadiradio.org);

WHEREAS, Radio Azadi has consistently worked to live up to the statement by the highly regarded former King of Afghanistan, aired during the Service's first broadcast, who expressed his confidence that Azadi would "play a crucial historic role serving the people of Afghanistan and the region;"

WHEREAS, Radio Azadi provides accurate information on domestic and regional politics, extremism, corruption, warlordism, gender issues, human rights, and other pressing topics that are under-reported or misreported by other media, and its weekly call-in shows give young Afghans experience in exchanging ideas, hearing alternative views and tolerating debate;

WHEREAS, Radio Azadi serves as an information bridge between Afghan citizens and their government and contributes to the establishment of stability and good governance in Afghanistan, by reporting on government activities and giving listeners a chance to hold government officials accountable during live interviews and discussions; and

WHEREAS, Afghan Culture Minister Kamal Sadaat recently thanked Radio Azadi for its "enormous contribution to freedom of speech, promoting democracy, and bringing people's voices to the government and that of the authorities to the people," while listener Aziz Kargar Ghazniwal congratulated Radio Azadi for "delivering programs that contribute to our freedom;"

## **Minutes of April 6, 2017 Meeting**

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Broadcasting Board of Governors and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) that we celebrate and commemorate the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of RFE/RL's Afghan Service, Radio Azadi.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Broadcasting Board of Governors and CEO applaud and thank current and former members of the Afghan Service for their dedication to professional journalism.

## Minutes of April 6, 2017 Meeting

ATTACHMENT 7

### RESOLUTION HONORING THE 15<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF RADIO SAWA OF THE MIDDLE EAST BROADCASTING NETWORKS

April 6, 2017

WHEREAS, Radio Sawa was launched on March 22, 2002, is part of Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Inc. and will be celebrating its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017;

WHEREAS, Radio Sawa brings millions of people across the Middle East and North Africa accurate and objective news and information that is vital to the region;

WHEREAS, Radio Sawa's courageous and dedicated journalists provide exceptional reporting from conflict zones across the region including Iraq, Libya, Darfur and Yemen;

WHEREAS, Radio Sawa engages and interacts with its audience through call-in programs, such as *Morning Papers* and *What's Your Opinion*, and social media, providing a robust discussion of events in a free and respectful environment;

WHEREAS, Radio Sawa's website and Facebook page reach millions of readers, providing unbiased reporting to the younger generation through platforms they regularly use;

WHEREAS, Radio Sawa's internationally recognized, award-winning reports from across the region and the U.S. are a staple of its unique programming;

WHEREAS, Radio Sawa highlights topics not reported on other media outlets, such as human rights, freedom of speech, and religious tolerance;

WHEREAS, Radio Sawa's informational programs such as *Free Zone* and *Sawa Magazine* serve as an outlet where people across the Middle East and North Africa can hear in-depth information about critical issues facing the region and the world;

WHEREAS, Radio Sawa is frequently cited in the Arab media as a source of news;

WHEREAS, Radio Sawa's correspondents' human interest stories bring credible depiction of facts and generate voluntary civic action; and

WHEREAS, Radio Sawa has more listeners across the region than any other radio station.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Broadcasting Board of Governors and CEO that we celebrate and commemorate the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Radio Sawa.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Broadcasting Board of Governors and CEO applaud and thank current and former members of Radio Sawa for their dedication to professional journalism.