Writing press releases and web stories

Maximum length: press release 400 words; web stories 300

Press release structure

1st paragraph – What is the most important part of the story? Why should we care? Introduce the news angle, the date and source. Not a summary, just the main fact. Max 25 words.

2nd paragraph - develop the main idea

3rd paragraph - add a quote from an expert to back up the main statement

4th paragraph - include background and context

5th paragraph - add a second quote if needed

6th paragraph - develop the larger perspective, vision for the future, action needed.

Contact information, background, web links, official description of MFF, web address

- ❖ **Tell the most 'newsy' things first; the next most important things next; and so on, in descending order.**
- ❖ **State why the story is significant. <u>SO WHAT</u>? What its means to the outside world**

- ❖ **Use concrete examples and facts to back up your claims**

News release checklist

- • Contact the global media officer when planning a release or web story that you think is for a global audience. We can discuss the copy and appropriate mailing lists.
- • Make sure the story is timely and newsworthy.
- • Be accurate and scientifically sound but resist too much interference of technical staff.
- • Use the most recent "About MFF" text (integrated into the MFF news release template) as the figures constantly change.
- • Translate the news release into other languages when appropriate. If you're not working in your mother tongue, get it proof-read by a native speaker.
- • Send out to the MFF National Communication Focal Points.

Keeping it simple and interesting

- One or two key messages. People suffer information overload - they must immediately grasp what you're saying
- Think of a catchy headline. Imagine what a newspaper or the BBC news website would write
- Keep the language as simple as possible – explain technical terms in brackets if you have to use them
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short. Don't leave your reader breathless! Don't use four words when you can use two 'Close to' , not 'in close proximity to'
- Write for a general audience – don't assume prior knowledge
- Avoid jargon – e.g. synergies, linkages, frameworks, mainstreaming, policy processes, strategic objectives…
- Use acronyms sparingly and spell them out the first time they're used
- Choose quotes that are meaningful, succinct and preferably contain a sound-bite