



# GEO ASOOL

{DRAFT}

OUR VISION FOR BETTER  
MEDIA IN PAKISTAN

## VISION DOCUMENT—OUR VALUES, GOALS & DECLARED BIASES.<sup>1</sup>

### Core Value

Our greatest strength is the reputation of the brand GEO. We must do everything to enhance it and nothing to undermine or dilute that reputation. We believe our reputation is built upon the following:

### Goals:

- a) Encourage tolerance in society
- b) Create an enabling environment for thought and change
- c) Promote “Public Interest”; ultimately the viewer is our employer
- d) GEO Pakistan!
- e) Truth and Accuracy
- f) Impartiality: Through diversity of opinion
- g) Bringing the world to Pakistan and Pakistan to the world
- h) Accountable & Valuing Feedback
- i) Positive Activism

#### a) Encourage tolerance in the society

We believe tolerance for each others ideas and feedback will make us overcome our differences and will help us grow from them instead of being divided by them. Tolerance will help us move our country and our people towards a progressive and peaceful society.

#### b) Create an enabling environment for thought and change

Creating an enabling environment for discourse and debate will allow the entrepreneurship of ideas. An enabling an environment for ideas will provide flexibility that is needed for our changing needs and environment. Such a foundation will not only provide a springboard for further progress but will also help absorb and cushion the varied potential tensions that exist in a plural society.

#### c) Promote “Public Interest”; ultimately the viewer is our employer

Public Interest is the guiding light of our actions. Anyone who deals with the viewer is expected to honor that principle, knowing that ultimately the viewers are our employers. We seek to report and present stories of significance that add value and enrich people’s lives. Empowering our viewers with knowledge and insight so they are able to make well-informed opinions and decisions affecting their future, is the greatest way we can serve the public interest.

<sup>1</sup> GEO Asool-Vision document is our constitution- Our Values, Goals & Declared Biases. Derived from GEO Asool Vision Document, we have revised and circulated GEO Asool Best Practices/Code of Conduct draft amongst our TeamGEO members. We request all our stakeholders across the world including media, academia, government & NGO officials and regulators, and above all our viewers, to send us their feedback at: [asool@geo.tv](mailto:asool@geo.tv)

## d) GEO Pakistan!

We are patriots. Discussing issues and presenting criticism with the intention to improve the overall conditions is part of patriotism. We will be patriots at the expense of potential criticism. However we will have a clear boundary when that criticism creates despondency or bias against the very sovereignty of the country- for we believe true national interest overrides business and personal interests.<sup>2</sup>

## e) Truth and Accuracy

We strive to be accurate and establish the truth. Accuracy is more important than speed. We will be honest and open about what we don't know and avoid unfounded speculation. We aim to never mislead our viewers and always protect their right to know, and form their own opinion.

We favor fact over opinion. Nevertheless we understand opinions are important as well not only because they enrich the value of the information but also in a data starved society where facts are difficult to ascertain, opinions assume further importance. However we will ensure that the expression of opinion is not confused with the assertion of fact. Moreover we will be open about any conflict of interests, and editorial discretion and biases we may be using or are forced to use.

We will be extra sensitive to these aspects and protect our viewer's rights through verbal and visual disclaimers.

## f) Impartiality: Through diversity of opinion

We aim to be fair and open-minded and it is our goal to reflect all significant strands of opinion by exploring the range and conflict of views. We will be objective and even handed and will always strive for balance and present diverse points of view even when majority may not want to hear the minority point of view.

We assure our audiences that our decisions are neither influenced by political or commercial pressures nor by any personal interests (except for the declared biases that have been listed in the "Positive Activism", section: i, see below)

## g) Bringing the world to Pakistan and Pakistan to the world

We will try our best to showcase the best practices of the world to our audiences; present them as options and compare them to our history and circumstances to expand the horizons of our minds and the potential for progress through debate. We will do this even at the expense of criticism. GEO will also try its best to represent Pakistan internationally through the distribution of our contents worldwide.

## h) Accountable & Valuing Feedback

We are accountable to our viewers; their continuing trust in GEO is the most essential part of our social contract with them. We will thus be open in admitting our mistakes and encourage a culture of willingness to learn from them. We pledge to our viewers and our detractors never to take criticism personally and even when viciously attacked we will react with balance.

GEO will always encourage robust internal and external feedback and promote mechanisms to facilitate that.

<sup>2</sup> The definition of National Interest may be different for different stakeholders of the State including Government, Bureaucracy, Security Forces, Establishment, Judiciary and others. A conflict of interest will be present when institutional balance doesn't exist making the comparative definitions of National Interest controversial. GEO will strive to build an understanding with all stakeholders of the State, to build an understanding of National Interest and have a regular dialogue to demonstrate that understanding.

## i) Positive Activism: Likes (Biases for) and Dislikes (Biases against)

To protect our reputation and credibility we try our level best not to be biased on most issues, nevertheless there are some areas where that very reputation & credibility will be at stake if we are not biased. The following are some areas which are important to us and where activism may take place.

## Likes and Dislikes

### 1. Biases: There will be no bias in the following areas:

- a. Between government and the opposition
- b. Between the political parties
- c. Between the conservatives and the liberals
- d. Between urban and the rural
- e. Between the provinces
- f. Between casts and ethnicities
- g. Between the genders
- h. Between age groups
- i. Against any religion or sect

### 2. Biases: We will be biased in the following areas:

a. **People vs the Government:** We will favor public interest over any other consideration. We represent the people of the country and not the government of the day. Ultimately our viewers are our employers.

b. **State vs the Government:** Many don't know the difference, the government of the day is not Pakistan; they are merely public servants elected by the citizens. Many a times the interests of a government may not be the interest of the state. Confronted to choose we will always be biased for the state vs the government.

c. **Justice vs the Judiciary:** We have a bias for justice. We firmly believe that justice is the cornerstone of a progressive and tolerant society. However we understand there is a fine line between justice and the judiciary. The latter is primarily appointed to safeguard those principles.

d. **Urdu vs English:** There is a natural bias in our society for English vs Urdu. Our culture promotes English communication in marketing, finance, law, medicine, business profession to name a few areas. We understand also that colonial and western pop culture also influences this thinking. In order to provide a counter balance to this as well as to protect the language that binds our nation together, we will favor Urdu over English when presenting and communicating with our TV audiences.

e. **Facts vs the Opinions:** We will favor fact over opinions. Though opinions should be celebrated for they also enrich the value of information. But we will ensure that facts are never confused with opinions.

f. **Democracy vs the Dictatorship:** we will always favor democracy over dictatorships; no matter how bad a political government might appear and how good an individual dictator might promise to be, our bias

in favour of democracy is fixed. However we do believe that real democracy includes independent judiciary, free media, ability to have an independent foreign policy, easy access to information, accountability of elected officials with regular, free and fair elections within and amongst political parties.

g. **Accountability vs Vindictiveness:** We stand for accountability; both internally and externally. But we will always be vigilant to the threat of vindictiveness disguised as accountability.

h. **Fundamentals vs Fundamentalism:** Fundamentals of faith and fundamentalism are worlds apart. We believe, Islam is a religion of peace and progress that introduced humanity to powerful concepts of universal rights the modern world celebrates. We will be against any propaganda, foreign or local, against this image and will do whatever is possible to distinguish between the fundamentals of our faith and the ignorance of fundamentalism.

i. **Institution vs Individual:** Our forefathers and founders of this nation were great individuals but they also made it clear that building, protecting and developing institutions is more important than following any individual. Institutions are the pillars of a modern state and provide foundation for stability and balance in society.

j. **Best Practices vs All Else:** We are for best practices, regardless of their origin. If we think a local way of doing something is better than an international best practice, we will not let the 'foreign value effect' dictate us. Similarly if we know of a practice, value or technology that is better abroad, we will promote that practice even at the expense of what some may call tradition.

k. **Ideal vs Practical:** Idealism inspires hope for the future. At times the right thing to do may not seem practical at the time. But we must support the right thing to do even at the expense of practicality and regardless of the opposition we might face from forces of the status quo. That opposition at times might be disguised under orthodoxy and patriotism.

l. **Choice (active/khudi) vs Fatalism (reactive, passive):** There is a tendency in our society and culture to leave things to chance, to fate or mystical intervention. We believe we need to encourage proactivity.

m. **Merit vs Nepotism:** We will promote and celebrate decisions on merit and will shun decisions based on politics, nepotism and individual gain.

n. **News vs Commercials:** If and when we are forced to choose, we will choose news over business. If any one doubts our ethical position then they may appreciate our enlightened sense of long-term greed instead of short-term greed. For we understand that in the long run our balanced coverage leads to superior commercial performance for us and our stakeholders.

o. **Question/Argument vs Answers:** We believe that media's predominant role is not to find answers but to raise questions. Professors, teachers, scientists, experts and governments may take the lead in answering but we must ask our questions and this is how we best serve the public interest. Pursuit of answers is served through questions and we will defend the ability to ask at all times.