



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE OSCE REPRESENTATIVE ON
FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA**

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 19 June 2014

Mr Chairman,

Freedom of expression is a basic requirement for the full enjoyment of other human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is therefore essential to preserve and strengthen the fulfilment of this right, both for individuals and for those who make it their profession to keep us informed. Regrettably, the work of the Representative on Freedom of the Media and her report today confirm that this freedom is under pressure in many participating States.

We are concerned by the many direct attacks on journalists. Neglect of investigation and prosecution sends a clear signal to perpetrators. Impunity increases the risk of further violence against journalists. We agree with those who today have argued in favour of renewing our efforts to reach agreement on strengthening the commitment to protect journalists.

We have also seen a number of journalists being prosecuted on criminal charges. There are strong indications that their critical voices are the real reason behind these charges. The use of libel laws and disproportionate fines are other measures states use. We are grateful to Ms Dunja Mijatović for speaking out in these cases and for bringing them to our attention.

Mr Chairman,

In times of conflict, media and journalists become even more vulnerable. The current crisis in Ukraine is a grave example. RFoM reports more than 300 cases of violence against media representatives in Ukraine within a five-month period. Her report also includes a number of cases of repeated and illegal switching off of television channels.

Equally disturbing is the active use of the media to form opinions on the crisis in Ukraine. In particular, Russian media – increasingly under state control – consistently produce false or biased

information on current events in Ukraine. The use of propaganda, including deliberate misinformation, exceeds what we have seen in any recent conflict.

Mr Chairman,

I commend the RFoM for her initiative to bring together Ukrainian and Russian media representatives and for having them sign a Memorandum. We look forward to the outcome of their next meeting on June 27th.

Mr Chairman,

Digital media have become an important source of information. The rights our citizens have offline they should also have online. We should therefore renew our attempts to reach consensus on a text on freedom of the media in the digital world. We acknowledge that the free flow of information may also be used for criminal and undesired activities, including hate speech. However, this is not sufficient reason for trying to restrict or control digital media.

Mr Chairman,

I have mentioned some extreme attacks on freedom of the media. But we need to be attentive in most participating States, including in my own country, Norway. Today we see a tendency towards concentration of ownership, increased expectations of profit and attempts to increase savings by employing fewer journalists. This can over time result in less capacity for investigative journalism, less variety of views and, perhaps, greater caution in the media.

Mr Chairman,

The need for a strong, independent RFoM is as pressing as ever. We are grateful for her unbiased criticism of constraints on media freedom in all parts of the OSCE area. Her constructive cooperation with participating States helps us fulfil our commitments. To continue this work, her office needs adequate resources. We as participating States are responsible for providing this.

Mr Chairman,

Let me conclude by thanking Ms Dunja Mijatović for the professional and independent way she fulfils her mandate.

Thank you, Mr Chairman