



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT BY NORWAY IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT BY THE OSCE REPRESENTATIVE ON FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 27 November 2014

Mr Chairman,

I subscribe to many of the points made by speakers before me, in particular Italy on behalf of the European Union and the US, but allow me to emphasize the following five points:

First, freedom of the media is essential for exercising freedom of expression. Free and independent media are therefore fundamental for a democratic society.

Second, we commend the Representative on Freedom of the Media for speaking out on the threats to the safety of journalists. We support her call for all governments to investigate and prosecute cases of harassment, attacks and killings of media representatives. In some participating States, journalists are imprisoned on criminal charges, though there is reason to believe that their critical voices or exposure of corruption and mismanagement are the real causes of their arrest.

Third, we recognize that freedom of the media is not without challenges. Digital media provide for free flow of valuable information, but also of extremist views and hate speech. Some participating States want to counter this with restrictive legislation. This is a dangerous path. We must look for other strategies to fight hate speech than by restricting freedom of expression.

Fourth, an important part of the Representative's work is cooperating with and assisting our governments. But she also criticizes us when she observes violations of media freedom commitments. We should welcome this and we should welcome it by providing her with the resources she needs to fulfill her tasks and by respecting the autonomy of her institution.

Fifth, the conflict in and around Ukraine has illustrated how media can be used for political purposes. The massive propaganda, in particular by Russian-language media, has negative effects on the possibilities for peace and reconciliation. We support the initiatives taken by Dunja Mijatović to bring together Ukrainian and Russian journalists to discuss principles for reporting on the conflict. This is a constructive effort to counter the current negative reporting.

And finally, Mr Chairman: A few weeks ago, I introduced Dunja to – I think in fact it was my wife. I said: This is Dunja. She is our media freedom watchdog. She has understood the role of a watchdog: She not only barks, she also bites!

Thank you, Mr Chairman