

Canadian Delegation to the  
Organization for Security & Cooperation  
in Europe



Délégation du Canada auprès de  
l'Organisation pour la sécurité et la coopération  
en Europe

**FINAL – AS DELIVERED**

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR FREDERICKA GREGORY,  
ON BEHALF OF: LIECHTENSTEIN, NORWAY, SWITZERLAND AND CANADA  
ON CURRENT ISSUE: World Press Freedom Day  
910<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL  
MAY 3<sup>RD</sup>, 2012**

Mr. Chairperson,

I have the honour today to speak on behalf of the following participating States:  
Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Canada.

Today we mark World Press Freedom Day. We take this opportunity to recognize that freedom of the media contributes greatly to other freedoms and the consolidation of democracy. However, to our deep regret, restrictions on this fundamental freedom still prevail. On this day, let us remind ourselves as States having renewed on several occasions our commitment to greater freedom of the press – in this organisation and elsewhere – that we must strengthen our efforts to ensure that media freedom is maintained, defended and expanded.

The right of everyone to hold opinions, without interference, as well as the right to freedom of expression includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, whether orally, in writing or in print, or through any other media of their choice. When media freedom is respected, governments are held accountable, public policies are designed more effectively and people's voices are heard. It is one of the essential foundations of a free and democratic society.

Our OSCE region has profoundly changed over the last decades. The changes brought forth by technological progress have transformed the journalist's profession and have given a voice to more and more people. Indeed, a new era was ushered in with the advent of Internet that has transformed the way journalists work and how news is being published and received throughout the world. It has allowed millions of people of all walks of life to inform themselves and express themselves openly and more easily. This change, while overall positive, also represents new challenges.

Whereas social media offers an unprecedented degree of connectivity and information, a worrying tendency threatens freedom of expression and the freedom of the press online today. We are witnessing the blocking of certain social networks and news websites, the arrests of bloggers and an increase in the number of cyber-attacks on websites that criticise the current government.

And, in this connection, allow me on behalf of the Like-minded Group, to congratulate the OSCE and its Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatovic, who topped the recent opinion survey conducted by The Guardian newspaper on those who have had the most impact in keeping the Internet open and free.

More generally, safety of journalists remains an urgent concern. Independent and pluralistic media will not develop if reporters constantly work under the threat of kidnappings, hostage taking, attacks, intimidations, illegal arrests, sexual assault, particularly against women reporters, and assassinations.

Therefore, World Press Freedom Day is an opportunity to renew our commitment to the freedom of the press, both on-line and off-line. We must also resolve to remain seized of the matter and vigilant about the threats to which journalists and other media professionals are subjected to. The States of our region must protect all individuals' right to freedom of opinion and freedom of expression. The problem of impunity must be addressed as an absolute priority.

In addition, this day must be one of commemoration for all those who lost their lives while dutifully fulfilling the requirements of their occupation. We must pay homage and honour their courage.

Freedom of the press is the bridge that binds comprehension and knowledge. It is essential for the exchange of ideas between nations and cultures, which is in itself a condition leading to lasting mutual understanding and cooperation and respect between different parties that is so vital in the OSCE region, and so central to our goals of building our security community.

Thank you.