



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 7 May 2015

Mr Chairman,

In a statement last Sunday Norway's Foreign Minister Børge Brende said that World Press Freedom Day is an opportunity to remind the world of the importance of defending freedom of expression and the right to have a free press. It is disturbing, the Minister emphasized, to see that the number of countries in the world in which there is full freedom of the press is falling. Safeguarding freedom of the press is an important part of the Government's focus on promoting freedom of expression in our foreign and development policy,' Foreign Minister Brende underlined.

Mr Chairman,

The purpose of World Press Freedom Day is to celebrate the fundamental principles of press freedom, to evaluate press freedom around the world, to defend the media from attack and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives while carrying out their work. According to the International Federation of Journalists, 135 journalists and other media workers were killed in 2014. Just 14 % of the world's population lives in countries where there is complete freedom of the press.

In his statement Foreign Minister Brende underscored that free and independent media underpin any vibrant democracy. In countries where journalists and editors are subjected to pressure and threats, there is more self-censorship, and democracy suffers as a result. For every journalist who is killed, many others are pressured into silence. Women journalists and other media workers are particularly vulnerable to harassment and violence. The fact that women are underrepresented in the media sector itself and as sources for journalists is also a persistent problem.

Mr Chairman,

The themes for this year's World Press Freedom Day are independent and quality media, gender and media, and digital safety for journalists and their sources. Norway is actively engaged in these fields, and intends to further intensify its efforts.

Through Norwegian and international media organisations, We are supporting the training of journalists and other media workers in the areas of human rights, ethical journalism, quality journalism and safety.

We will continue to invest in training and we will seek to improve the protection of journalists and other media workers. Digital safety for journalists and their sources is also an area we intend to focus our efforts on more closely in the time ahead.

Mr Chairman,

The attack on *Charlie Hebdo* in January was a direct attack on freedom of expression and freedom of the press. It was also a horrific reminder of the violence many journalists around the world face in the course of their work.

The answer is not to put restrictions on the freedom of expression.

This has been underlined by prominent media freedom organizations, including by the Media Legal Defence Initiative in their address to the Human Dimension Committee earlier this year. The media freedom organizations have also pointed out that the most serious threats to freedom of expression have indeed come from governments.

Mr Chairman,

The need to safeguard these fundamental freedoms, including in conflict situations, was also raised in the joint declaration on **“Freedom of Expression and Responses to Conflict Situations”**, issued on the World Press Freedom Day by our own Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms Dunja Mijatović together with Special Rapporteurs on Freedom of Opinion and Expression from the UN, the Organization of American States and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Mr Chairman, we support this joint declaration. Let me take this opportunity to commend Ms Dunja Mijatović for the impartial and professional way in which she exercises her mandate.

Thank you, Mr Chairman