



PERMANENT DELEGATION  
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE REPRESENTATIVE ON FREEDOM OF  
THE MEDIA

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile  
to the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 18 June 2015

Mr Chairman,

The Representative on Freedom of the Media has again reminded us of the importance, and the volume, of her task. With a small office and limited resources, she manages to be active on many fronts. Regrettably, there are no signs that she will lack work in the near future. In several participating States, journalists are threatened, prosecuted or even killed for criticizing the government or exposing corruption and human rights violations. In short, we are not behaving in accordance with our OSCE commitments.

Mr Chairman,

This week we had another important event organised by RFoM. Her office brought together more than 400 participants, including leading experts and a broad range of civil society organisations, to discuss the safety of journalists, media freedom and pluralism in times of conflict. In all conflicts, we depend on the media to provide information on what is happening and how it is affecting the civilian population. In all conflicts, we see diverging accounts and interpretations in the media. It is necessary and useful to discuss how journalists can protect themselves and be protected by the parties, principles of ethical reporting and abuse of the profession for propaganda purposes.

Mr Chairman,

Propaganda was one of the most popular topics in this conference. Sadly, misuse of the media as a tool for propaganda and manipulation is not something new, but its extensive use in the Ukraine conflict is concerning. The answer must not be restrictions on media freedom. To counter propaganda we need education of the public to be able to identify what is – and what is not – propaganda. We need more ethics in the media. We need more good investigative

journalism and accurate reporting. Norway commends the Representative's efforts in bringing such controversial topics up for discussion repeatedly, and looks forward to the recommendations and best practises that can be drawn from these discussions.

Mr. Chairman,

We agree with the Representative that we too often see examples of unacceptable restrictions of media freedom under the pretext of ensuring national security.

The need to promote and protect human rights while countering terrorism was therefore the topic of the first joint meeting held of all three dimension committees last week. In the Human Dimension Committee, we have also discussed this with the UN Special Rapporteur of Freedom of Opinion and Expression. We very much hope our work can contribute to reaching agreement on a Ministerial Council Decision on freedom of expression in Belgrade.

Mr Chairman,

We support the initiatives taken by Dunja Mijatović to bring together Ukrainian and Russian journalists to discuss principles for reporting on this conflict. This is a constructive effort to counter biased and even untruthful reporting.

Mr Chairman,

The Representative keeps a constant watch on each of us to see that we are living up to our joint commitments. This includes my own government. Recently Foreign Minister Brende received concerns from the Representative with regard to a legislative proposal to limit the Freedom of Information Act. The amendments would exempt documents for preparatory meetings in certain municipality governments from disclosure requirements. The Representative feared that this could affect the media's ability to report on issues of public interest on a local level. The Ministry of Justice as well as Parliament were informed of the concerns.

Mr Chairman,

Speaking out when governments are not living up to their commitments is an important duty of the Representative. We applaud her and her excellent team for their work and fully support her autonomy and the way she is discharging her mandate.

Finally, I would like to join others in thanking Andrei Richter for his service to the OSCE and for promoting media freedom. He has also been very supportive to me and my delegation in our work in the Human Dimension Committee.

Thank you, Mr Chairman