



PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

As delivered by Counsellor Hilde Austad
to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 5 May 2016

Mr Chairman,

Two days ago, World Press Freedom Day was celebrated with events all over the world. The overarching theme for this year is access to information and fundamental freedoms.

In a statement, Minister of Foreign Affairs Børge Brende said that ‘Access to information is crucial if people are to be able to make informed decisions about matters that affect them, and to understand and exercise their rights. A broad range of independent media outlets is also vital so that people can have access to a variety of information. These media outlets can shine a critical spotlight on the exercise of power and authority and promote transparency and accountability,’ said the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Access to information is also one of three priority areas in the Ministry’s strategy for promoting freedom of expression, which was launched in January.

Mr Chairman,

Access to information is important for democratic governance. That is why ensuring the safety of the journalists who provide that information is so vital. Attacks on journalists are attacks on access to information, on an informed public debate and ultimately on democracy. All attacks on journalists must be investigated, prosecuted and punished.

Mr Chairman,

We welcome the joint declaration on Freedom of Expression and Countering Violent Extremism, issued by the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the Special Rapporteurs from the UN, the Organization of American States and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. This illustrates the strong link between freedom of expression, media freedom and security.

The Representative on Freedom of the Media Ms Dunja Mijatovic has initiated discussions in the OSCE on topics such as safety of journalists in conflict, propaganda and countering hate speech, all particularly relevant to a security organisation. Let me take this opportunity to commend her and her team for their impartial and professional work.

Thank you, Mr Chairman