



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE REPRESENTATIVE ON FREEDOM OF THE
MEDIA

As delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad
to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 1 December 2016

Mr Chair,

We thank the Representative on Freedom of the Media for the clear, principled and unbiased way she raises issues concerning media freedom in all participating States. Regrettably, we see an increase in cases where independent media are forced to close or brought under government control, and where journalists are arrested and prosecuted for bringing matters of public interest to our attention. Independent journalism is a condition for uncovering abuse of power and corruption. It is thereby a condition for a democratic society and respect for the rule of law.

We welcome the work of the Representative on enhancing the safety of journalists. This is a priority also for my government. All threats, intimidation or attacks against journalists are a threat to freedom of opinion and expression. Governments who fail to investigate, prosecute and punish such incidents are failing to protect one of the cornerstones of democracy.

Mr Chair,

The Representative on Freedom of the Media has raised our awareness of the increasing harassment and threats against journalists, in particular online. Female journalists face more and particularly aggressive harassment because they are women. This restricts the freedom of expression not only of those concerned, but also of others who hesitate to make their voice heard. We welcome the publication and recommendations on countering online abuse of female journalists from the RFoM.

Mr Chair,

We are witnessing an alarming level of propaganda in the media, not least in connection with the conflict in and around Ukraine. The Representative and her office have not only drawn attention to this, but have worked on ways to identify and counter propaganda. Not by restricting media freedom or sanctioning media. Her answer is to promote media pluralism and media independence. We support this approach. Factual and investigative journalism and wide access to information is the best antidote to propaganda. We should encourage media literacy programmes, media self-regulation and increasing ethical standards of journalism. The Representative can assist us in this, through the expertise of her office. Indeed, her initiative to

promote dialogue and build confidence between Ukrainian and Russian journalists' unions is a concrete example of the practical value of her work.

The new initiative to work on peace journalism seems an interesting follow-up of approaches to countering propaganda and raising ethical standards in journalism.

Mr Chair,

We strongly support the Chairmanship's proposal to agree on decisions in Hamburg on freedom of expression and free and pluralistic media as well as on actions required to counteract propaganda for war and hatred. We hope it will be possible to reach consensus on these important topics.

Let me conclude by expressing our support and appreciation for the excellent work of the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the way she exercises her mandate.

Thank you, Mr Chair