

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/458/19
3 May 2019
OSCE+
ENGLISH only



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the OSCE,
the United Nations and the International Organizations
in Vienna

1226th Permanent Council of the OSCE, 2 May 2019

World Press Freedom Day

Joint Statement, delivered by Switzerland

Mr. Chairman,

This statement is delivered on behalf of Andorra, Canada, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

World Press Freedom Day is an opportunity to stand up for the rights to freedom of expression, freedom of information, and of course press freedom. These rights are cornerstones of democracy and need to be protected at all times. We hereby reaffirm our commitment to defending the independence of the media and the safety of journalists. We would also like to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives whilst carrying out their work.

In addition, World Press Freedom Day is an opportunity to assess the state of the freedom of the media in the OSCE region. According to this year's *Reporters Without Borders* ranking, while the Americas and Europe still have some of the best media freedom situations, some parts of these regions have also suffered the greatest deterioration. We also note that a worrisome number of OSCE countries rank very poorly in the World Press Freedom Index. Journalists in our region are increasingly threatened, harassed, arbitrarily detained, assaulted, and killed. Attacks against journalists occur both online and offline, and particularly affect women journalists.

There is also a dangerous climate of denigration and de-legitimization of the media. Indiscriminate attacks by politicians on the media constitute an important threat to freedom of expression and must cease immediately.

Furthermore, there has not been any significant progress in a number of long-standing cases of impunity for murders of journalists.

Against this background, international organizations have become increasingly active to safeguard freedom of the media. Last September, a resolution on the safety of journalists was adopted by consensus at the Human Rights Council. And in December 2018 the Ministerial Council of the OSCE adopted a decision on the safety of journalists. Participating States must increase their efforts to ensure the safety of journalists in line with all applicable international commitments, whether adopted in the UN, the Council of Europe, the OSCE or elsewhere.

We very much welcome the conference organized by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media last month on "Journalists Under Attack: a threat to media freedom". We encourage all OSCE participating States to implement the Ministerial Council Decision and seek further advice by the RFOM on how to provide safe working conditions to journalists and other media workers.

Finally, we would like to reiterate our full support to the mandate and the work of the RFOM. His role as watchdog and strong advocate for a free and independent media is becoming ever more important, and he can count on our countries' full support.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.