

JOINT STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2007

On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day 2007, the undersigned Embassies and International Organisations reiterate the importance of unfettered and vibrant media for the development of a democratic, free and open society. A functioning democracy is unimaginable without a pluralistic media landscape, without a genuinely free and independent press and without the possibility that all citizens may exercise their rights to freedom of expression and access to information.

In this context, we recall once again the various commitments and promises undertaken by the Republic of Moldova in and under the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Co-operation and Security in Europe, the EU–Moldova Action Plan and the United States' Millennium Challenge Programme.

We attach great importance to these values. We therefore deeply regret that limited progress has been achieved over the past year in implementing them in practice. Indeed, Moldova has actually backtracked over the past year, raising concern over the seriousness of its commitment to a free press.

We commend the Republic for Moldova for the progress achieved in improving the larger legal framework with regard to media freedom, and in particular note its adoption of new broadcasting code. We remain, however, mindful that recent missteps in implementation of the legislation might put these achievements in jeopardy.

The hasty and non-transparent reorganization of Radio Antena-C and Euro TV, the interruption of Antena-C's broadcasting signal during the reorganization process and the detention of peaceful protestors and journalists on 27 March in Chisinau mark a worrisome negative trend. Furthermore, Teleradio Moldova has still, many years on, made little progress towards becoming a truly independent public-service broadcaster.

Without a correction in this trend, Moldova may not be able to meet its international obligations.

We therefore urge the concerned bodies of the Republic of Moldova, including the Audiovisual Co-ordination Council to take all necessary steps to reverse this trend and to ensure that real progress is achieved in supporting the development of a free, independent and pluralistic media landscape in the Republic of Moldova.

The campaign for the 2007 general local elections starts today in full swing and presents an important opportunity in this regard.

Chisinau, 3 May 2007

Embassy of Bulgaria

Embassy of the Czech Republic

Embassy of France

Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany

Embassy of the Republic of Hungary

Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania

Embassy of the Republic of Poland

Embassy of Romania

Embassy of the Republic of Turkey

Embassy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Embassy of the United States of America

EU Special Representative for the Republic of Moldova

Delegation of the European Commission to the Republic of Moldova

Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe

OSCE Mission to Moldova