



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1050 Vienna, 7 May 2015

EU statement on World Press Freedom Day

The EU would like to draw the attention to the Declaration by the High Representative, Federica Mogherini, on behalf of the European Union on the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day

On Sunday, we celebrated UNESCO World Press Freedom Day. Free, diverse and independent media are essential in any democratic society because without freedom of expression and media, an informed, active and engaged citizenry is impossible. That is why press freedom is a pillar of any society. It has to be promoted and can never be taken for granted. It is thanks to the courage of many journalists that a word often neglected still has a meaning: truth.

The EU pays tribute to those journalists and media actors who have lost their lives, been imprisoned or otherwise suffered unjust consequences for exercising their right to freedom of expression. We reaffirm our commitment to promote and protect freedom of expression and freedom of the media worldwide, and to continue to promote the safety of journalists and other media workers.

Modern information and communication technologies (ICTs) are part of everyday life and provide new opportunities for the fulfilment of human rights and for social and economic development. Non-discriminatory access to information and freedom of expression for all individuals, both online and offline must be ensured and protected. The internet should remain a single, un-fragmented network, subject to the same laws and norms that apply in other areas of our day-to-day lives where individuals can benefit from their rights and from judicial remedies when those rights

are infringed. These principles have been recognised in the Council Conclusions on Internet Governance of 27 November 2014 and Conclusions on Cyber Diplomacy of 11 February 2015.

The EU is committed to further strengthening international efforts aimed at the promotion of freedom of expression and welcomes the UN new special procedures mandate on the right to privacy.

Almost a year after the Council of the European Union adopted the EU Human Rights Guidelines "on freedom of expression online and offline" the EU is determined to continue to use all appropriate EU external financial instruments to further protect and promote freedom of opinion and expression and to support media freedom and pluralism.

Mr Chairman,

World Press Freedom Day provides us all with an opportunity to examine the record of our OSCE region in the area of Media Freedom and Freedom of Expression, and consider how we can improve. In doing this, the Representative on Freedom of the Media is a key resource, established by the participating States, and tasked with the, often challenging, role of advocating for full compliance by all OSCE participating States with their OSCE freedom of expression and media freedom commitments. The Representative provides invaluable assistance to participating States in addressing serious problems in these areas. The work of the RFoM is widely recognized, and we congratulate her to the award of the Charlemagne Medal for European Media in Aachen last week.

We want to highlight the very useful joint declaration on the occasion of this year's World Press Freedom Day made by the Representative and her colleagues from the United Nations, the Organization of American States and the African Commission on Human rights and People's Rights on *Freedom of Expression and Responses to Conflict Situations* – a very

topical issue in our region. The EU reiterates its full support for the mandate of the Representative on Freedom of the Media and both supports and commends the current Representative for the manner in which she discharges it.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA, MONACO and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.