



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE REPRESENTATIVE ON FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA, MS DUNJA MIJATOVIC

As delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad
to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 9 March 2017

Mr Chair,

We thank Ms Dunja Mijatovic for being an engaged Representative who has placed the OSCE at the forefront in discussions of current media freedom issues. Her work demonstrates how central freedom of expression and freedom of the media is in all dimensions of security.

The Representative has repeatedly reminded us that attacks on journalists represent a fundamental challenge to freedom of expression. We join her in urging all governments to investigate all such attacks and prosecute perpetrators.

RFoM has also raised the problem of harassment of female journalists and women who express themselves, particularly online. Today, we have heard appalling examples of completely unacceptable acts. And I wish to thank Teresa Havlicek and Hanna Herbst for their courageous work and for sharing their experiences and views here today. Harassment is an attempt to silence not only those who are threatened, but also others. It is an attack on freedom of expression.

We welcome the recent Joint Declaration on “Fake News”, Disinformation and Propaganda, which the Representative launched with colleagues representing the UN, the Organization of American States and the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights. This declaration goes right to the heart of issues we are confronted with daily. Disinformation and propaganda are used for political purposes to increase tension and distrust, and undermine the credibility of the media. We support the response of the RFoM. We must counter disinformation and propaganda by facilitating media pluralism and providing correct information. Censorship, closing media outlets or shutting down the internet is often a pretext for silencing criticism.

The RFoM project that brings together journalists from Ukraine and Russia to discuss media issues with the aim of improving the quality of reporting is innovative. Media can contribute to building trust in a crisis and avoid inciting hatred.

Combatting hate speech while preserving freedom of expression is an issue all our countries are grappling with. The Representative has been strong and clear on the need to preserve internet and media freedom.

Ms Mijatovic has not been afraid to make public statements when states violate their commitments, and she has targeted countries in the whole OSCE region, including my own. Her office provides expert assistance to help us ensure freedom of expression. By bringing together practitioners, academics and government representatives in frank discussions, she has raised awareness and facilitated exchange of best practices. All this in an independent, constructive and unbiased way. Not everyone has the capability of being principled and consistent, speak with such clarity and to the point, with impeccable integrity, -and still be widely respected and listened to. This has made the office of the RFoM relevant, valuable, recognised and respected. So, dear Dunja, we do thank you for your commitment, your outspokenness and your impartial and principled approach. We wish you the very best for the next phase of your life.

Thank you, Mr Chair