



**PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF PORTUGAL
TO THE OSCE**

1397th meeting of the Permanent Council

3 November 2022

Statement by Portugal in reply to the Report of OSCE

Representative on Freedom of the Media

Mr. Chair,

We are happy to welcome back to the Permanent Council the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Madam Teresa Ribeiro. In addition to the EU statement, I would like to emphasize some points in my national capacity.

Madam Representative, dear Teresa,

From the outset, allow us to restate Portugal's strong support to the autonomous institutions and their mandates. Never before has this Organisation been challenged with so many blockades and obstructionist positions, severely undermining its capability to deliver on its mandate. Never before has the OSCE been faced with such a blatant breach and disrespect of the principles and commitments commonly agreed by all participating States. In this sense, it is of the utmost relevance to preserve the autonomous institutions and their mandate to safeguard and promote the OSCE *acquis*.

The event that took place yesterday, marking the 25th anniversary of RFoM's mandate, established following the 1996 Lisbon Summit, clearly testifies the paramount value of the institution. It unequivocally demonstrates the need to sustain the RFoM's work in addressing the increased challenges to media freedom within the OSCE area, exacerbated by the overall degradation of the security and human rights situation across our region.

We thank the Representative and her able team for her active engagement and for the report presented today. We continue to be deeply concerned by the downward trend identified therein: since your last appearance in this



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forum, the dire situation of media freedom and freedom of expression remained not only grim but has also further eroded.

Naturally, as you pointed out in the report, no country has a perfect media freedom record. However, while some acknowledge their issues and devote themselves to addressing them, others, on the contrary, refuse to admit their serious shortcomings. The situation becomes even worse when such attitude is coupled with an organised and deliberate targeting of civil society, undermining democracy, rule of law and human rights. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine jeopardizes our tenets of security and, with regard to media freedom, Russia's actions are the most systematic clampdown in our region for the past decades.

Madam Representative,

The topic of safety of journalists and media workers is a key one. In your report you underline the importance of effectively responding to the challenges to freedom of expression in an increasingly digitized world, including through the use of encryption to protect journalists and media workers, allowing them to freely conduct their activity. In this respect, I would like to highlight that the "Portuguese Charter of Human Rights in the Digital Age", foresees a broad range of rights for users in the cyberspace, namely that everyone has the right to communicate electronically using identity protection to exercise civil and political rights without censorship or discrimination.

Furthermore, making the best use of digital technologies, including protection against disinformation, requires digital skills. In this vein we contributed to the Ex-B project "Promoting Media and Information Literacy in the OSCE participating States" and we look forward to the Roundtable of 6 December.

Madam Representative,

During your official visit to Portugal, we had the opportunity to discuss the situation of media freedom, including the issues faced by our own country, but we have also reiterated the key importance of OSCE and RFoM for the



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present and the future. Allow us thus to conclude with a quote from the Report of the Advisory Group of Eminent Experts on Freedom of the Media:

“The year 2022, and most probably the years that follow, will be most challenging for those upholding the cause of freedom of the media. We will need vigilance, collaborative thinking and collective action. In other words, the RFOM will need to further strengthen and broaden its network, and engage in a structured dialogue process with multiple stakeholders.”

You can count on Portugal’s support for your endeavours.

Thank you.