
Chairmanship: Albania**1266th PLENARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

1. Date: Thursday, 7 May 2020 (via video teleconference)

Opened: 10.10 a.m.
Suspended: 1.10 p.m.
Resumed: 3 p.m.
Closed: 6.05 p.m.

2. Chairperson: Ambassador I. Hasani

Prior to taking up the agenda, the Chairperson reminded the Permanent Council of the technical modalities for the conduct of meetings of the Council via video teleconferencing technology during the COVID-19 pandemic (SEC.GAL/45/20).

The Chairperson also welcomed the new Permanent Representative of Andorra to the OSCE, H.E. Ambassador J. Serra Serra.

3. Subjects discussed – Statements – Decisions/documents adopted:

Agenda item 1: SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF
WORLD WAR II: ADDRESS BY THE CHAIR OF THE
GERMAN PRESIDENCY OF THE INTERNATIONAL
HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE ALLIANCE

Chairperson, Chair of the German Presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (PC.DEL/400/20 OSCE+), Russian Federation, Russian Federation (also on behalf of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) (PC.DEL/402/20), Croatia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra, Canada, Georgia, San Marino and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/450/20), Azerbaijan (PC.DEL/404/20 OSCE+) (PC.DEL/405/20 OSCE+), Switzerland (PC.DEL/401/20 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/409/20),

Ukraine (PC.DEL/436/20), United Kingdom, Norway (PC.DEL/440/20), Mongolia (PC.DEL/429/20 OSCE+), Moldova (PC.DEL/433/20 OSCE+), Latvia (also on behalf of Estonia and Lithuania) (PC.DEL/403/20 OSCE+), Armenia (PC.DEL/430/20), Belarus, Special Representative of the Mauthausen Memorial

Agenda item 2: PRESENTATION OF THE 2021 PROGRAMME OUTLINE
BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL

Chairperson, Secretary General (SEC.GAL/48/20 Restr.) (SEC.GAL/58/20 OSCE+), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/406/20 OSCE+), Azerbaijan (PC.DEL/408/20 OSCE+), Switzerland (PC.DEL/407/20 OSCE+), Turkey (PC.DEL/412/20 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/418/20), Norway (PC.DEL/410/20), Canada (PC.DEL/417/20 OSCE+), Armenia (PC.DEL/431/20 OSCE+), Croatia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; as well as Andorra, Moldova and San Marino, in alignment) (PC.DEL/445/20), Kazakhstan (PC.DEL/424/20 OSCE+), United Kingdom (PC.DEL/419/20 OSCE+), Bosnia and Herzegovina (PC.DEL/438/20 OSCE+)

Agenda item 3: REVIEW OF CURRENT ISSUES

Chairperson

- (a) *Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea:* Ukraine (PC.DEL/437/20), Croatia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/448/20), United Kingdom, Canada (PC.DEL/423/20 OSCE+), Turkey (PC.DEL/442/20 OSCE+), Switzerland (PC.DEL/420/20 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/421/20), Germany (also on behalf of France) (PC.DEL/443/20 OSCE+)
- (b) *Situation in Ukraine and the need to implement the Minsk agreements:* Russian Federation (PC.DEL/425/20), Ukraine
- (c) *Europe Day, to be observed on 9 May 2020:* Croatia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Andorra, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, San Marino and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/449/20), United States of America (PC.DEL/422/20), Turkey (PC.DEL/426/20 OSCE+), Moldova (PC.DEL/434/20 OSCE+)
- (d) *World Press Freedom Day, observed on 3 May 2020:* Switzerland (also on behalf of Andorra, Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and San Marino) (PC.DEL/441/20 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/428/20) (PC.DEL/432/20/Rev.1), Croatia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the country of the

Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina, in alignment) (PC.DEL/446/20), United Kingdom, Sweden, Azerbaijan (PC.DEL/427/20 OSCE+), Armenia (Annex 1), Romania (Annex 2), Bulgaria (Annex 3), Russian Federation, Turkey, Serbia, France

Agenda item 4: REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
CHAIRMANSHIP-IN-OFFICE

Announcement of the distribution of a written report on the activities of the Chairmanship-in-Office (CIO.GAL/55/20 OSCE+): Chairperson

Agenda item 5: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

- (a) *Presentation given by the Secretary General during the Security Dialogue on COVID-19 and its impact on the politico-military aspects of security in the OSCE region, held at the 945th plenary meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation on 6 May 2020:* Director of the Office of the Secretary General (SEC.GAL/56/20 OSCE+)
- (b) *Virtual visit by the Secretary General to Turkmenistan on 6 May 2020:* Director of the Office of the Secretary General (SEC.GAL/56/20 OSCE+)
- (c) *Virtual workshop on capacity-building and international cyber/ICT security organized by the OSCE together with the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (GFCE), held in Vienna on 5 May 2020:* Director of the Office of the Secretary General (SEC.GAL/56/20 OSCE+)
- (d) *Recommendations by the Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in support of the fight against human trafficking during and following the COVID-19 crisis, issued on 30 April 2020:* Director of the Office of the Secretary General (SEC.GAL/56/20 OSCE+)

Agenda item 6: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the work of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly: OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA.GAL/7/20 OSCE+)

4. Next meeting:

Thursday, 14 May 2020, at 10 a.m., via video teleconference



1266th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1266, Agenda item 3(d)

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF ARMENIA

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

The existence of free and independent media is the central driving force for a vibrant democratic society and for democratic transformation. Freedom of the media and freedom of speech combine to form one of Armenia's most important achievements, brought about by Armenian society as a result of its adherence to the values of freedom and democratic choice and its resolute determination to defend them.

Any issue related to the freedom of the media and other human rights and fundamental freedoms is a priority item on the agenda of the Government of Armenia, which has taken concrete and tangible actions in this regard, as has been noticed by its international partners and relevant specialized mechanisms.

In response to concerns raised by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in the press release issued on 24 March 2020 regarding the limitations on media activity during the state of emergency in the Republic of Armenia, I would like to note that at the time when the state of emergency was declared it was necessary to apply such temporary limitations because of the urgent need to counter the spread of disinformation and "fake news" related to COVID-19.

Right after the day the state of emergency was declared in Armenia, the government officials responsible for media relations held a number of inclusive meetings with editors and representatives of media advocacy NGOs to consult and find the best acceptable options for amending the relevant provision regulating media activity during the state of emergency. The recommendations and comments submitted by all the participants of the meetings were carefully considered, and on the basis of that review the relevant government decree was adopted on 24 March, revising the restrictions introduced on 16 March.

It should also be emphasized that within the period 16 to 24 March not a single legal procedure was launched against any media outlet.

Mr. Chairperson,

Now let me say a couple of words about the statement which was delivered a few minutes ago by the distinguished Ambassador of Switzerland on behalf of a group of States.

We are extremely bewildered, to say the least, to note that all these positive steps have remained unnoticed by this group of delegations and that the name of Armenia appears in their statement. Moreover, it is regrettable that the group of delegations has overlooked the statement of the Representative on Freedom of the Media welcoming the swift reaction of the Armenian Government in addressing his concerns. Therefore, one might question the real purpose of this exercise, even more so since, among other things, it also fails to mention other countries which were under the scrutiny of the Representative on Freedom of the Media within the said period.

I don't think it is a good practice to name a country but at the same time to fail to mention the progress made in the said country. We urge the delegations in question to check their records with regard to the situation of freedom of the media in Armenia. It goes without saying that they can also consult the Representative on Freedom of the Media on that matter.

The selective enumeration of countries and at the same time the failure to objectively assess the situation with regards to freedom of the media in those States devalue the credibility of that statement.

By the way, I should draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the fact that all the restrictions with regard to media reporting on COVID-19 have been lifted in Armenia, first and foremost thanks to the pluralistic and free media environment, which enables media actors to engage with the government in order to continuously ensure freedom of the media in Armenia.

Armenia once again reaffirms its unreserved commitment to upholding the fundamental rights of freedom of speech and freedom of the media. At the same time, as we have repeatedly emphasized, combating "fake news" is possible only within the overall protection of these and other fundamental freedoms and with due consideration to their interdependence and complementarity.

Having said all this, we are looking forward to continuing our close co-operation with the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

I thank you.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1266
7 May 2020
Annex 2

Original: ENGLISH

1266th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1266, Agenda item 3(d)

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF ROMANIA

Mr. Chairperson,

With regard to the statement issued by Switzerland on behalf of a group of States, I would like to point out that Romania has been in swift communication with the Representative on Freedom of the Media and provided him with the necessary clarification on issues of concern, be they institutional, procedural or legal.

We have done so out of respect for the Representative on Freedom of the Media, an OSCE institution whose activity Romania has always appreciated and supported. Even during the testing times of the pandemics, Romania is unabatedly promoting the indispensable role of free, diverse and independent media, both online and offline, without undue interference and influence.

As a further testimony of its commitment, on the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania on 3 May underlined that the freedom of the media is the guarantee of every functional democracy, in which the citizens must be informed correctly and timely. It also reiterated the support for the freedom of the media, freedom of expression, media pluralism, the protection of journalists and media actors.

I would like to kindly ask you, Mr. Chairperson, to attach this statement to the journal of the day.

Thank you and over to you.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1266
7 May 2020
Annex 3

Original: ENGLISH

1266th Plenary Meeting
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STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF BULGARIA

Mr. Chairperson,

I fully align myself with the European Union statement. In my national capacity I would like to use my right of reply in response to the statement made by Switzerland together with other countries. In the statement, Bulgaria was mentioned as a country that has adopted a broad range of measures aimed at disinformation and misinformation in the context of the COVID crisis.

I have to make it clear that Bulgaria has not adopted any such measures.

There was indeed a reaction by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to a draft amendment to the relevant legislation submitted to the Bulgarian parliament by some of its members. We are keeping in contact with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media's office on this matter.

According to the Bulgarian Constitution, any member of parliament has the right to initiate legislation. However, any conclusion at this stage is bound to be premature since the draft amendment will not be considered as long as the state of emergency is in place.

I would like this statement to be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.