

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF LITHUANIA**16 SEPTEMBER 2019**

WORKING SESSION I

HDIM

Freedom of expression comes at a great price. Those who are bringing the truth and uncovering human rights violations are being attacked or imprisoned on fake charges, without due process.

Democratic governments and democratic media are facing the same demons: disinformation and „fake news“. Lithuania is very concerned that media is being used by some States with their malicious propaganda aiming to influence democratic processes, including during the elections. We must promote independent journalism, and strengthen societies' critical thinking and resilience.

Safety of journalists and media workers (online and offline), especially women journalists, and effective countering of disinformation, has been a longstanding top priority of my country.

Lithuania is among the initiators of the informal Groups of Friends on Safety of Journalists at the UN in New York and Geneva, the UNESCO, and, recently at the OSCE. Safety of journalists is a part of our campaign for the seat in the UN Human Rights Council. We actively support the initiative on International Partnership for Information and Democracy initiated by France and *“Reporters without borders”*, and have also joined the Global pledge on media freedom launched by the UK and Canada earlier this year.

During recent years, Lithuania has been actively working to counter disinformation, which, sponsored by the autocratic countries, has no borders. We are investing in enhancing society's cyber and information resilience. As an example of such a tool is an online platform *“Debunk.lt”* created by the Lithuanian media outlets in cooperation with Google.

The RFoM and his dedicated team's efforts are crucial in protecting the pillars of modern democracy, and Lithuania would like to extend its strong support for the tireless work they do. We are convinced that full implementation of OSCE decision on the Safety of Journalists is of utmost importance, and the update of the RFoM guidebook would be beneficial in this regard.

Last but not least, I would like to extend my country's strong support for all international and grass-root organizations, journalists and media workers, who are tirelessly implementing a function of a watchdog worldwide 24/7 in preserving freedom of expression.