

WORKING SESSION 4:

Fundamental Freedoms I:

Freedom of Expression, Free Media and Information, Including best Practises for the  
Protection of Journalists

**Statement by Austria**

Mr./Madam Chair,

Austria fully aligns herself with the statement made by XX on behalf of  
the European Union.

The promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and  
expression, media freedom and in particular the safety of journalists are  
key priorities of Austria's work in the field of human rights. The main  
obstacles to a secure working environment for journalists in many  
countries – also in the OSCE region – are widespread impunity for  
crimes against them as well as a lack of prevention of these attacks.  
While the primary responsibility for creating a safe working environment  
for those providing individuals and society with information lies with  
States, the work of the OSCE media freedom representative is  
invaluable in protecting the freedom of the media and the safety of  
journalists. We commend her initiatives to foster discussion among all  
stakeholders in the area of internet freedom and security, the same as  
her dedication to supporting individual journalists at risk.

Other regional and international organisations and mechanisms, such as  
the Council of Europe, UNESCO, the Office of the UN High  
Commissioner for Human Rights or the UN Human Rights Council also

undertake important activities and programmes for enhancing the safety of journalists. For example, upon an Austrian initiative, the OHCHR presented a compilation of good practises for the safety of journalists in September 2013, which can serve as a practical tool for States.

It is also the primary responsibility of States to ensure that the same rights that people have offline are also protected online. In the light of the digital revolution, which also enhances capacities for surveillance, decryption or mass data collection, especially the right to privacy, as a fundamental human right, faces important challenges. While legitimate national security considerations may justify limitations to the right to privacy, (online and offline), any restriction must be proportionate, based on law, and subject to review by an independent authority.

We would, in conclusion, like to offer the following recommendations:

- Participating States shall enable a safe working environment for journalists and media workers, particularly by preventing attacks and bringing the perpetrators to justice.
- The OSCE is encouraged to increase its cooperation with other regional or international organisations and mechanisms working for the safety of journalists, in order to exchange experience and coordinate activities.