



## **Right of reply by Serbia – Working session 4**

We would like to exercise our right of reply to the interventions by Independent Journalists Association of Serbia and the NGO Article 19.

Serbia takes seriously the protection and safety of journalists, and our officials have strongly condemned all recent cases of assault on journalists and expressed determination to step up efforts to enable better working conditions for them. President Aleksandar Vučić recently stated that violence against journalists would not be tolerated, that journalists would be protected and attacks punished.

This was proven by concrete measures undertaken in investigating assaults against journalists and bringing those responsible to justice, including the mentioned case of the member of ruling party. Some of these measures were also recognized and welcomed by the RFOM in his previous reports.

Last July, Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dačić participated at the Global Conference on Media Freedom in London and signed the global pledge on media freedom as a sign of our willingness to address threats to media freedom and safety of journalists.

During the previous period, representatives of the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of Interior, together with representatives of associations of journalists, engaged constructively in subsidiary bodies, such as the Working Group on Safety of Journalists and the Government's Commission for determining the facts in the investigations of killings of journalists. The work of these bodies has led to more efficient legal processing of cases of threats and assaults against journalists, but also to the long-awaited conviction of persons responsible for the killing of journalist Slavko Ćuruvija.

Let me also stress that Serbia is currently working on creating a beneficial environment for media. We are thankful to the RFOM and his Office, as well as to the OSCE Mission to Serbia, for their support and expertise provided to us in preparing a new Media Strategy. As was recognized in the European Commission's 2019 report on Serbia, the Media Strategy was drafted in a transparent and inclusive manner and its preparation involved all relevant stakeholders, including representatives

of media and journalists' organizations. We are convinced that the adoption of the Media Strategy will contribute to further enhancement of the media landscape, thus improving access to information and strengthening the position of journalists.

Thank you.