

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. ANDREY KELIN, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1060th MEETING OF
THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

18 June 2015

**In response to the report by the
OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatović**

Mr. Chairperson,
Ms. Mijatović,

We thank you for the information on the results of the work of your Office.

There is no doubt that pluralism and freedom of the media are highly important conditions for democracy. It is through the media that the right of freedom of expression is most effectively asserted. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media is called upon to support the efforts of participating States to fulfil their commitments in this important area and to help the committee of experts to deal with the problems that exist. Among the Office's most important tasks is to monitor public access to the various sources of information and the situation regarding the safety of journalists, including those in war zones.

We note the efforts of the Representative to monitor the situation in Ukraine. We were counting on your co-operation with the authorities and the various public statements in connection with the many violations of freedom of speech and the safety of journalists in that country to ultimately bear fruit. Unfortunately, there has been no progress in the investigation of the killing of journalists, including four Russians, in Ukraine, the kidnapping of journalists, intimidation and pressure on the media.

We strongly object to the inclusion in the section on Ukraine of a passage about Crimea. It demonstrates an ignorance of the real situation of this constituent entity of the Russian Federation. Work is being carried out there systematically to bring media activities into line with Russian legislation, and decisive steps are being taken to combat hate speech and incitement to ethnic discord, and to ensure broadcasts in all official languages of the Republic of Crimea, including Crimean Tatar. A public Crimean Tatar television and radio broadcasting company is being set up. Considerable funds have been earmarked for this project. A public council has been established consisting of 30 prominent Crimean Tatar public figures, representatives of the intelligentsia, teachers and experts. There are 250 media

registered in Crimea, including 19 Crimean Tatar ones. Furthermore, another 30 media use the Crimean Tatar language in their work.

We support many of your recommendations such as safeguarding freedom of expression in the context of the *Charlie Hebdo* tragedy. However, we cannot fully agree with your premise that participating States should restrict freedom of expression only if it can be directly connected to violent actions, harassment or other forms of unacceptable behaviour against communities or certain parts of society. Otherwise, it would mean that hate speech or insults would be tolerated completely in relation to religions, cultures, civilizations, and individual countries and peoples. We believe that greater co-operation by your Office with the Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office on tolerance could help to produce a more balanced approach to this problem.

On the whole, your report on the first half-year reflects the work of the Office in a wide range of areas: a report of over 50 pages, more than 70 letters, a score of press releases, meetings, country visits, and participation in various events. The figures are impressive. At the same time, a careful analysis of the approaches on which the work of the Office is based reveals a somewhat different picture.

Ms. Mijatović loves to repeat that she cannot in any way be accused of a geographical imbalance. She says that if there are no violations in a country, there is no cause for criticism. This argument is understandable. But what if there is an identical situation in different countries and the Representative reacts in different ways? This is a clear case of double standards.

To illustrate what I mean, I should like to cite a couple of examples. In the case of the arrest of the cameraman Sergejs Medvedevs in Latvia and the Italian journalist Giulietto Chiesa in Estonia, Ms. Mijatović quietly wrote personal letters to the authorities. But for some reason the arrests of Khadija Ismailova in Azerbaijan and the journalist Tomislav Kežarovski in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia warranted public press releases. Amendments to the laws on freedom of information in Norway and on public security in Spain, and the protection of sources in the United Kingdom are the subjects of “quiet diplomacy”. But, for some reason a law on undesirable foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Russia, which has nothing at all to do with the media, becomes the subject of public condemnation. Amendments to the Lithuanian law on provision of information to the public calling for tougher penalties for broadcasters and rebroadcasters and the many cases of censorship by CNN in the United States of America in general received scant attention by the Representative’s Office. It is remarkable that the detention and beatings of journalists during the Occupy Wall Street demonstration or similar violations during the events in Ferguson in the United States of America were not given due attention in the reports. It would be interesting to know what guides the Representative on Freedom of the Media in the way she reacts to specific countries.

Recently, the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media has been drawing particular attention in the OSCE to the unacceptability of State propaganda. And yet the label “false State propaganda” is being applied to information exclusively on the principle that it comes from Russian media, while completely ignoring the fact that this information is based on real facts, documented in the field by journalists, sometimes at the cost of their lives. Meanwhile, Ms. Mijatović pays no attention to the blatant anti-Russian hysteria and the

stream of lies spread in Western or Ukrainian media, which it appears her Office takes as the truth.

Pluralism of the media is an extremely important subject. Here, too, however, the Representative's attitude seems to follow a strange logic. In her eyes, media with State involvement are an obvious evil that has to be eradicated. And yet, once again, it is only Russian media that are implied. I should like to make clear once again that in Russia there are almost 70,000 print media, 20,000 electronic media, and around 1,500 agencies, with State or municipal participation in only 9 per cent of the registered media.

Meanwhile, the persistent efforts in the Baltic States, Moldova and Ukraine to "cleanse" their media landscapes of Russian media at best give rise to "quiet" correspondence with the authorities. What happened to calls for media pluralism and ensuring public access to different sources of information?

The Conference on Journalists' Safety, Media Freedom and Pluralism in Times of Conflict, which came to a close the day before yesterday, was the perfect example of the double standards employed by the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media. On the one hand there was the stated subject of the Conference, but on the other there was the politicizing focus exclusively on the Ukrainian conflict. We heard hypocritical calls for depoliticization of the discussion and hand-picked politically engaged speakers. The invitation to a free exchange of opinions was accompanied at the same time by a reluctance to give the floor to Russian journalists and NGO representatives. I shall refrain from commenting on this "innovation" involving a constant stream of uncensored invective directed at the head of the Russian delegation and the clearly orchestrated activities of the Ukrainian "claqueurs". I must confess that it is a long time since we have encountered such Russophobic orgies within the OSCE. In that connection, we urge the Chairperson-in-Office and Secretary General to take steps to prevent this international organization from turning into a propaganda show.

At a recent United Nations event in Geneva, the distinguished Representative on Freedom of the Media made manifestly anti-Russian statements. We do not understand who authorized her to do so. After all, she is the head of one of the OSCE executive structures financed by all 57 OSCE participating States.

In conclusion, we have always held the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media in high regard, counting on it to show an impartial and considered approach to problems and to endeavour not to condemn but to help countries when they are confronted by problems. Unfortunately, this is not the case. As we go forward, this Office is turning more and more into the very mouthpiece for propaganda that the Representative so actively opposes. We are forced to take this into account when considering our future work with this Office.

Thank you for your attention.