

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2015
Statement by the Delegation of Canada
Monday, September 21, 2015

Working Session 1 - Freedom of expression and Freedom of the media

Mister Moderator,

The Representative on Freedom of the Media has rightly pointed out that the world, including the OSCE region, is witnessing increasing threats to freedom of expression, from the terrorist attacks in Paris and Copenhagen at the beginning of this year to more insidious forms of violence and harassment faced by female journalists online. As their shape and scope varies, we must remain vigilant and seek calibrated responses to these threats with a view to safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms.

As 46 OSCE-participating States declared in a joint statement, which Canada had the honour to deliver at this year's Belgrade Conference on the safety of journalists: "Societies around the world are strengthened and enriched by free speech. No one should face murder, violence, intimidation or harassment for exercising his or her right to freedom of expression".

In this context, we are deeply concerned by the actions of some OSCE-participating States that censor, persecute and imprison activists, journalists and bloggers who exercise their rights, be it online or offline. Of particular concern this year are situations in Azerbaijan and Russia.

In a year during which she has herself received unwarranted criticisms and online attacks for doing precisely the job we have collectively entrusted her with, Canada reiterates its support to the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. We appreciate Ms Mijatović's engagement in addressing a broad range of issues, including the enjoyment of rights and freedoms online, the use of freedom of expression to promote tolerance and understanding in our diverse societies, as well as addressing the serious challenges posed to journalists and free media in the context of the crisis in Ukraine.

In light of continued and serious threats to free expression and free media in some parts of the OSCE region, Canada's recommendations for this session are:

- For participating States to fully respect their OSCE commitments and international obligations with regards to the rights to freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression, both online and offline.
- For participating States to ensure that limits to freedom of expression are prescribed by law, transparent and demonstrably justifiable as reasonable limits in a free and democratic society.
- For the Representative on Freedom of the Media to continue her efforts to provoke reflection and actions of participating States on how freedom of expression and media freedom can be advanced through the internet.
- For the Representative on Freedom of the Media to continue to bring implementation issues to the attention of participating States, with a focus on egregious and violations of freedom of expression, freedom of the media and the safety of journalists.