

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Permanent Council No 1136
Vienna, 9 March 2017**

**EU statement in response to the OSCE Representative for
Freedom of the Media, Ms Dunja Mijatovic**

The European Union welcomes Ms Dunja Mijatovic back to the Permanent Council. We thank her for her detailed report.

We also thank Ms Hanna Herbst, Deputy Editor at VICE Austria, and Ms Teresa Havlicek, journalist at Wienerin, for sharing their stories and insights. Safety of female journalists online is an important topic on which the EU speaks out regularly. While safety of female journalists should be at the forefront of our work on media freedom every day, raising this issue in connection with International Women's Day is very timely.

Mr Chairperson, comprehensive security is the basis of our organisation. The rationale is that there can be no security among states without full respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, rule of law and democratic principles. When OSCE participating States established the position of a Representative on Freedom of the Media in 1997, we reaffirmed that free expression and free media are cornerstones of our common security, and recognized that further instruments were needed to safeguard them. The Representative on Freedom of the Media remains a vital instrument for the promotion of these fundamental principles and for protecting against their erosion. We regret that, despite the efforts by the Austrian Chairmanship, as well as the previous German Chairmanship, no consensus has been reached yet on a successor to Ms Mijatovic. We strongly support the uninterrupted continuation of this important function, and we encourage the Austrian Chairmanship to find a solution as soon as possible.

Dear Ms Mijatovic, we have already bid you farewell once. We are grateful that you agreed, in light of difficult circumstances, to serve one more year as the Representative.

Throughout the last seven years, this important mandate has been discharged with exemplary professionalism, integrity and impartiality by you. You have been a dedicated and tireless advocate for the principles and values that participating States have committed themselves to, but moreover a champion for the rights and security of the citizens of the OSCE region – be they journalists, social media users, or individuals seeking to engage in a free and open exchange of information and ideas – who these principles are intended to protect.

Since you took office in 2010, the challenges in our region have increased. Nevertheless, throughout that time you have not shied away from directly, and at times courageously, raising worrying developments in our region, wherever and whenever they have occurred without distinction. Repeatedly you have stood up for the principle that security and human rights are not concepts to balance against one another, but are two sides of the same coin. When critical voices have been persecuted as “extremists”, when anti-terrorism laws and practices have undermined free expression, and when media has been unduly restricted in the name of national security or public morals, we have been able to rely on you to speak in defense of free media and free expression, both online and offline.

Looking back at your tenure, you have continuously addressed all of us frankly and directly on the challenges confronting media freedom across the OSCE region, and the steps that need to be taken to address them. This is precisely what the participating States have mandated the RFoM to do and in turn we have all committed to co-operate fully with the Representative. From the EU side we have sought to do so and we have benefited immensely from the advice we have received. We have also shared many of the concerns you have raised in relation to other parts of the OSCE area.

Conflict and crisis in the OSCE region have characterised your last years as Representative. Your fearless work on media in times of conflict has shown the

importance of having a strong OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. The visit you undertook to Crimea three years ago, days before the illegal annexation of the peninsula by the Russian Federation, exemplified the courage and engagement that have been an integral part of your service. It also demonstrated the ability of the RFoM to respond rapidly to emerging threats and challenges, thus fulfilling the Office's important function as an early warning mechanism. Similarly, your pioneering work on the challenge of modern state fuelled propaganda provided the international community, journalists and citizens alike with an early warning of the re-emerging threat of propaganda as well as comprehensive recommendations for effective responses. Most recently, your Joint Declaration, together with inter alia the UN Special Rapporteur, on Freedom of Expression and "Fake News," Disinformation and Propaganda, provided valuable input. The organisation of joint meetings of Russian and Ukrainian journalists' unions is another testimony of your successful engagement in times of conflict. Your focus on the safety of journalists, including female journalists, and on open journalism are other examples of how you have been at the forefront of the issues that affect our region. All these challenging issues require constant attention, a resolute response and follow-up action by the OSCE.

Dear Ms Mijatovic, your outstanding work as our RFoM has earned you great respect far beyond the Hofburg. Through your professional and even handed approach, you have won friends in some of the most difficult places, where your advice has been, and continues to be, direly needed. We wish you the best of luck in your future endeavours.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.