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STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF
THE REPRESENTATIVE ON FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA

Delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 13 May 2021

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Madame chair,

Let me start by welcoming Ms. Ribeiro and thank her for this first report to our Council. Her report was indeed interesting to listen to, with important analysis and description of trends in our region. She also gave worrying examples of non-compliance with commitments.

Ms. Ribeiro has had an active first half year. We welcome the collaborative approach she has chosen, including the emphasis on close contact with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. We share her view that members of that Assembly can play important roles in raising awareness and motivating colleagues in their own States to act on OSCE commitments. We appreciated the format of the report, with more focus on analysis and less on activities.

We also see merit in Ms. Ribeiro's goal of a balance between public awareness raising and silent diplomacy. There is a time and a place for both within her mandate. The bleak picture she paints of the situation for media freedom in our region, calls for strong and clear public reactions to specific cases. It also calls for dialogue and long-term assistance to participating States in our efforts to change cultures, perceptions, and laws. Free media, safety of journalists and access to reliable information is important not only for the individual, but for the development and resilience of our societies.

Ms. Ribeiro has pointed to specific cases and country situations today. As participating States in the largest regional security organization in the world, we have time and again agreed that media freedom is essential for our common security. There are growing anti-media sentiments and attacks by the public on journalists and media workers. This

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should not be seen separately from tendencies of authorities to do the same. Government representatives and profiled leaders should be the first line of defense for media freedom, plurality, and safety. A state claiming democracy cannot accept impunity for attacks on media freedom.

We support Ms. Ribeiro's intent to continue activities regarding online media challenges and artificial intelligence. With the rapid developments in these spheres, the RFOM's activities must continuously develop, to keep up with trends and be able to assist States. We encourage close collaboration with the other multilateral and international organizations focusing on these issues.

We support the RFOM's recommendations with regards to the increasing restrictions on media working across borders, as stated in her communique on the World Press Freedom Day last week. The freedom to perform journalistic duties abroad is essential to building tolerance and understanding in our region.

We urge fellow participating States to support the RFOM and her office through securing competent staff and sufficient budgets. Strong support is however also demonstrated through making good use of the assistance the Representative and her office can offer.

Madame Chair,

The Human Dimension Committee had interesting discussions on the issues of media freedom, access to information and disinformation in our February meeting. I would like to thank Ms. Ribeiro for her contribution to this meeting. We look forward to continuing discussions in the Stockholm conference, organized by the Chairpersonship and the RFOM next week.

Thank you.