

## STATEMENT OF THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

### Working session 4: (Specifically selected topic): Safety of journalists

*Delivered by Ms. Hasmik SIMONYAN, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*

Madam Moderator,

Freedom of expression and free flow of information are cornerstones of contemporary democracies. Journalists, as watchdogs of these freedoms, play a crucial role to the very functioning of our societies. Yet, freedom of expression and the safety of journalists are facing major challenges today in various parts of the world, including OSCE area.

Various severe restrictions and high number of acts of violence against journalists and other media actors are extremely disappointing. The spectrum of interference is wide: it ranges from political and economic pressure, censorship to intimidation, arbitrary detention and physical attacks. Even more disturbing is the fact that these offences often remain unpunished and such impunity inevitably adversely affects freedom of the media. Addressing attempts of silencing critical voices of free media, including under the pretexts of “extremism”, “justification of terrorism” or “hate speech” is important as ever and we would recommend the Office of the RFOM to focus on these challenges and outline measures for better protection of journalists.

Promotion of freedom of media and freedom of expression should cover the entire OSCE region including conflict areas. We are of firm conviction that independent and free media can play a positive role in times of conflict through providing objective information, advocating peace and reconciliation. Impartial media reports conveyed from conflict zones serve a fundamental public interest: in the information era, images and news can have a decisive impact on the outcome of armed conflicts. Conflict areas should not be grey zones for realization of human rights, inter alia the right to seek, receive and impart information regardless of frontiers.

Harassment, criminalization, blacklisting and other restrictive practices aimed at isolating conflict areas from outer world and prohibiting visits of journalists should be strongly condemned. In this regard any attempt to deny access and criminalize visits of journalists and other media representatives to the conflict

areas should be recognized as early warning signs, which require early reaction, including reporting on those cases by respective international structures.

Thank you.