



REPRESENTATION PERMANENTE DE LA FRANCE
AUPRES DE L'O.S.C.E

**Working session 1: Fundamental freedoms I, including freedom of expression
(Monday, 21 September 2015): Statement from the French delegation**

I stand behind the statement of the European Union and wish to add a few points at national level.

1 – On 7 January this year, two armed terrorists struck in the heart of Paris, attacking the headquarters of the Charlie Hebdo newspaper. They murdered 12 people and injured 11 others. By attacking this newsroom, the terrorists did not only kill people. When a journalist is murdered, it is freedom of expression that is under attack.

Alas, the journalists killed on 7 January are not the only journalists to have been struck down for the cause in the OSCE area. The many statements by the Representative on Freedom of the Media show that the challenge of protecting journalists remains to be addressed. It is the primary responsibility of governments to protect journalists and allow them to go about their work independently, without obstacle. That involves combating impunity for the perpetrators of violence. Governments need to systematically investigate, apprehend and prosecute those responsible. Currently, 90 % of journalist murders remain unpunished, fostering further violence. The International Criminal Court (ICC) can also play a role. Under the Geneva Conventions, journalists are civilians. The murder can thus constitute a war crime under the Rome Statute.

2 – In our region, and elsewhere, violence against journalists is not limited to situations of armed conflict. Most persecutions take place in countries at peace, often where journalists are investigating cases of corruption or organized crime. Press independence needs to be guaranteed in the face of influences, pressures and power. The principle of the protection of sources needs to be fully respected. A free, independent and impartial press is an essential foundation for democratic societies.

3 – On 28 May this year, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 2222, which represents further progress for the recognition of the fundamental role of journalists, both on- and off-line, and the need to protect their work. We, OSCE participating States, must also be up to the challenge. It is our common responsibility to update our commitments to protect the freedom of expression that was hard-won and was proclaimed by our predecessors at the outset of our Organization. The OSCE Belgrade Conference on the Safety of Journalists this June was a first step which we need to build upon.

I would like to end by quoting what the President of the French Republic, François Hollande, said on the 70th anniversary of Agence France Press, on 19 January 2015: “It is not about telling others what they must think, but simply about ensuring that what is freely thought, expressed and said is respected.”