



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT BY NORWAY ON THE OPENING PLENARY SESSION OF THE 2013 OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION SEMINAR

As delivered by Counsellor Lars Løberg, Warsaw

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Madame Chair,

Let me join others in thanking the keynote speaker, RFoM Dunja Mijatovic, and the other introducers for setting the stage for a hopefully fruitful discussion on media freedom legal framework.

Norway aligned herself with the opening statement of the European Union, but I would like to use this opportunity to reflect a bit over some of the other statements made so far in the discussion.

Let me start by paying my tribute to my colleague and friend from the Kazakh delegation. So far he is the only speaker who has admitted shortcomings in his own country when it comes to media freedom, but he has also stated that his government has a willingness to improve on these shortcomings.

If the other 56 participating states had been perfect on media freedom, there would have been no use for this Human Dimension Seminar. However, as stated by Ms Mijavotivic and several of the subsequent speakers, not the least in the statistics referred to by my US colleague, we are not perfect. On the contrary media freedom is deteriorating in several participating states. That is why we need more of the Kazakh attitude and willingness to improve ourselves both east and west of Vienna.

We have heard Turkey state that the fundamental freedoms are enshrined in their Constitution, but despite judicial reforms, and other democratic improvements, an unprecedented number of journalists are being charged of “offending the Republic”. This underlines the need for continued democratic reforms in Turkey. Freedom of the media and freedom of speech is a matter of concern for every country, and it draws international attention. The Norwegian Union of Journalists has “adopted” one of these detained journalists, Mr. Tuncay Özkan. Özkan has already been held in custody for 5 years, his crime has been journalism, according to the

Norwegian NGO. If this is correct, this example further underlines the point made by the RFoM in her keynote address on discrepancies between national legislation and judicial practices.

Media freedom is not only about the safety of journalists. Most speakers have made references to the internet and to the World Wide Web as a medium for exchange of and a source for information, underlining the importance of the same rules and regulations being applied within new as well as old technologies. Or, as stated by my Swedish colleague, we need to agree on how best to implement commitments online as well as offline.

In this respect, we need to be able to agree on definitions. But when my Russian colleague in his statement proposed a definition of mass-media that did not include internet or the World Wide Web, then that is to me not even to discuss the snow that fell last year, but to discuss the snow that fell before the Ministerial in Sofia 2004.

Ms. Santos referred in her introduction to Portugal as moving from being one of the longest lasting dictatorships in Europe to a democracy where media is being respected. Mr. Usen Suleimen said a bit of the same about the transitions going on in Kazakhstan. Historic transitions take time, which we must respect. But we must also respect transitions in technology. Media develops, but their right of freedom remains the same.

More than 50 participating states stand behind the US proposal for a ministerial declaration on Fundamental Freedoms in the Digital Age. My plea is that we can all unite and agree on this text as a sign of willingness to improve on the media freedom conditions and, thus, to prove that the negative trend shown by the NGO statistics are misleading. If that would be the outcome, then this Human Dimension Seminar would indeed be a successful one.

Thank you, Madame Chair