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United States Mission to the OSCE

Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting ***Promotion of Pluralism in the New Media*** **Session II:** **Regulatory aspects of digital switch-over**

As delivered by the U.S. delegation at the
Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting, Vienna
July 8, 2011

The United States would like to welcome Andrei Richter as the new Director of the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. We support the work of the office and Representative Mijatovic to safeguard media freedom within the OSCE region. We look forward to working with you, Mr. Richter.

We want to thank the panel for introducing the technical issue of regulatory aspects of the digital switch-over. Participating States must ensure that media pluralism is not a casualty of the digitalization process. The digital system has the potential to expand pluralism and diversity in television and radio broadcasting because the digital spectrum's capacity far exceeds that of the analogue system. However, digitalization, itself, in no way guarantees greater pluralism. As has been noted by the panel this morning, problematic analogue regulatory regimes can be transferred to the digital system, at least in part. Governments can still implement restrictive controls over a digital system in a manner contrary to OSCE principles, or cut some broadcasters out of the digitalization process, thereby stifling pluralism. We have already seen governments using burdensome registration requirements as a pretext for preventing registration by outlets they don't like. The digitalization process and the resulting digital broadcasting environment should contain safeguards for fundamental freedoms and ensure pluralism, and not just plurality.

Governments have an important responsibility to help ensure the digital switchover occurs in a manner that strengthens the freedom of expression. We call on all participating States to plan the digitalization process with relevant stakeholders and those most deeply involved and affected by the process, including but not limited to, state legislative and executive structures, media NGOs, industry operators, citizens and consumers; and to bear in mind best practices from other states, in order to obtain the intended benefits of digitalization.

Thank you.