

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2015

Statement of the Czech Republic

Working Session 1: Fundamental Freedoms I

The Czech Republic aligns herself with the statement of the European Union to which we would like to make some comments in our national capacity.

We would like to thank the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms Dunja Mijatović for her work and constant reporting on the situation of media freedom. We echo the concern expressed by her and our partners over the worsening situation with regard to freedom of expression and growing restrictions on civil society actors, journalists and human rights defenders in the OSCE region.

In particular, we are concerned about cases of persecution of independent journalists and activists by the Russian Federation and the recent row of seriously flawed trials resulting in sentencing of the foreign nationals Oleh Sentsov and Oleksandr Kolchenko. We are worried about laws on foreign NGOs and “undesirable organizations” and increasing misuse of information and media for political purposes in the OSCE region. We follow with concern the situation of media freedom in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula and the campaign against independent journalists and human rights defenders in Azerbaijan, the most recent cases being those of Leila and Arif Yunus and Khadija Ismayilova. We call on the Participating States to release the unfairly imprisoned, to fulfill the commitments made in the area of freedom of expression and the media and to engage constructively with the Representative on Freedom of the Media on issues of concern and her recommendations.

For Czech Republic, the support of independent media has been a long term priority which was once again confirmed in the newly adopted Strategy for Human Rights and Democracy Promotion of the Czech MFA. Through the Transition Promotion Program, we annually dedicate approximately 400 thousand Euros to support media in Eastern Europe and will continue to do so. In partnership with Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty we provide fellowships to talented journalists from Eastern Europe and Western Balkans through the Václav Havel and Jiří Dienstbier Journalism Fellowships.

The Czech Republic has also been active within multilateral fora. For the past three years, we have been the main sponsor of the HRC resolution on equal participation in political and public affairs. This resolution recognizes the right of everyone to freedom of expression as an essential condition for equal participation which must be protected.

As a tangible expression of our support for the mandate and activities of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, we have provided voluntary funds to the Open Journalism project and others. As one of the co-sponsors of the side event “Extinguishing the Flame of Propaganda with Media Freedom and Pluralism”, let me use this opportunity and kindly invite you to join us tomorrow morning and discuss this important topic.