

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
WORKING SESSION 2
Fundamental freedoms I, including freedom of expression
September 23, 2014

As delivered by

Mr. Vaheh Gevorgyan, Head of the OSCE and Conventional Arms Control Division,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia

Mr. Moderator,

I would like to start by thanking Ms. Dunja Mijatovic, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media for their important contribution and guidance in framing discussions. Freedom of expression is not merely one of the fundamental freedoms. It is an unalienable right and its protection is the best indicator of overall situation of human rights. If we are to speak nowadays on existence of any standard of civilization that states should comply with in order to be an equal member of international community, the freedom of expression will come the first.

In the OSCE, to certain extent, we measure the necessity of our actions against the goal we set up in Astana on security community. Universal standards and application of freedom of expression is necessary prerequisite of creating a common security community. Thus, implementation of international obligations and the OSCE commitments on freedom of expression should guide us in the Helsinki + 40 process.

Armenia's progress in protecting freedom of expression is well recognized by the national and international stakeholders including OSCE institutions. Armenia has decriminalized the libel and subsequently addressed the issue of fines, which eventually led to the significant drop of overall cases. In our view, the ruling of the Constitutional Court which provided important guidelines to establish scales and its implementation can provide useful references to other participating states as a good practice in the OSCE area.

The effective addressing of crimes perpetrated against freedom of expression should remain high on the agenda of the OSCE as a security organization. The Armenian delegation raised on a number of occasions including at the level of the Permanent Council the urgent need to combat impunity against those who try to silence voices of journalists and community leaders through the most brutal and violent means.

The safety and protection of journalists should be ensured in the framework of reconciliation and the right to truth. Unfortunately, there are consistent efforts to silence voices of peace and reconciliation. The stigmatization and persecution of journalists and civil society members who are involved in the confidence building measures under the charges of espionage activities are taking dangerous precedents in the OSCE area.

Finally, we would like to submit a relevant recommendation to the participating states:

To refrain from persecuting journalists and civil society representatives involved in the confidence building measures within the conflict related environment.

Thank you