

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2017**Statement by the Czech Republic**

Working session 1: Fundamental freedoms I, including freedom of expression, free media and information, 11 September 2017

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Mr Chairman,

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 echo the concern expressed by the EU and other partners over the worsening situation with regard to freedom of expression and opinion in some OSCE participating states. We have seen growing persecutions and restrictions on civil society actors and independent media as well as intimidation and attacks on journalists which are not properly investigated by the state authorities. All these worrying tendencies highlight the important role of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

We would like to welcome the new Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr Harlem Désir, and to thank his team for an excellent job done so far. As a tangible expression of our support for the mandate and activities of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, we have repeatedly provided voluntary funds to the Safety of Female Journalists Online project.

For the Czech Republic, the support of independent media has been a long term priority. The understanding of the importance of the fact-based reporting and independent media has only grown over last couple of years as we have been facing numerous disinformation campaigns across the OSCE region.

Continuous and significant support to independent media, especially in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia regions where they are most vulnerable, constitutes an important part of our response to those attacks. We should be open to explore new ways to support journalists, editors and bloggers in their everyday struggle to protect the freedom of expression and to provide their readers and followers with verified information.

It is the responsibility of all governments to ensure the safety of journalists and to guarantee their independence by enabling legal framework. We are therefore concerned by all legal initiatives threatening to restrict the free media and freedom of expression, including those misusing the anti-terrorism legislation for this purpose. Intimidation, threats and even physical attacks on journalists are not acceptable and climate of impunity for these acts further undermines the freedom of expression in parts of our region.

Thank you.