



Statement by the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Working Session 6, Fundamental Freedoms 1

HDIM, 22 September 2016

Safety of Journalists

The Netherlands fully aligns itself with the statement given by Sweden on behalf of the EU.

Freedom of expression, including the safety of journalists and other media workers, is a priority for the Netherlands.

I would like to underline three elements with regard to the safety of journalists: prevention, protection and prosecution.

First, prevention

Violence against journalists needs to be prevented. With good prevention, one needs less protection and prosecution.

Authorities should actively promote a culture in which violence against journalists is unthinkable. Furthermore, OSCE participating states should have a comprehensive

legal framework that enables journalists to contribute to public debate effectively and without fear. Such a framework should guarantee access to information, privacy and data protection, confidentiality and security of communications and source protection.

Secondly, protection

Journalists need to be protected. By the law and by the authorities.

When authorities know of the existence of an immediate risk to the life of a journalist from criminal acts of a third party, they should take appropriate operational measures in order to remove that risk. Police protection is sometimes needed.

Third point is prosecution

Violent acts against journalists need to be persecuted.

It is alarming that journalists and other media actors in OSCE region are increasingly being intimidated, arbitrarily deprived of their liberty, physically attacked and even killed because of their work. Such abuses and crimes are often met with insufficient efforts by State authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice. This leads to a culture of impunity.

Over the past decade, around 800 journalists have been killed worldwide for bringing news and information to the public. This is one journalist, every week. And

even worse, more than 9 out of 10 of these cases go unpunished. This impunity emboldens the perpetrators of the crimes and at the same time has a chilling effect on society including journalists themselves. Impunity breeds impunity and feeds into a vicious cycle. This impunity also exists within the OSCE region and needs to be addressed.

One way of tackling impunity is through UNESCO, the UN's coordinating organisation when it comes to the safety of journalists. UNESCO asks countries to report on the status of judicial inquiries conducted when journalists are killed. The majority of the world's countries are still ignoring this request. That's why the Netherlands urges the countries concerned to start reporting to UNESCO, as a first step towards ending impunity.

Furthermore, the Netherlands would like to encourage the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to continue her important work to ensure that the topic of safety of journalists remains on the OSCE agenda.

Finally, the Netherlands encourages discussions about this important topic in preparation of this year's Ministerial Council.

Thank you.