

HDIM – UK NATIONAL STATEMENT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

We align ourselves with the statement made by Sweden on behalf of the European Union and would like to make a few national remarks.

Firstly we would like to pay tribute to the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms Dunja Mijatovic, and her team for their tireless efforts to fulfil the mandate of the institution. Ms Mijatovic has demonstrated her commitment to freedom of expression and freedom of the media through her strong leadership, impartiality and dedication to the role. We are grateful to Ms Mijatovic for agreeing to stay on in this position for a further year and call on fellow OSCE participating States to work together to reach consensus on a worthy successor later this year.

Freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, is a pre-requisite for security and stability. It is central to so many issues that we will discuss over the two weeks of this meeting, and well deserves its place as one of the fundamental freedoms we hold so dear.

Take democracy and elections. This is a busy year for elections and referendums, including in the UK, US, Russia and many other participating States. Independent media reporting is essential for healthy political discourse and effective informed political participation. It allows the electorate to debate issues and to form their own opinions: essential for a stable and mature democracy.

Take tolerance, non-discrimination and combating hate crime. We have seen from our experience in the UK the importance of an independent media which is able to shine a light on incidents of hate crime, racist or sexist abuse, and wider intolerance, to provide a platform for those who speak out to condemn them, to make clear that such crimes have no place in our society and to push for action to prevent them reoccurring.

A strong and independent media is also a prerequisite for tackling serious and organised crime and corruption. To give just one illustration, the UK media has played an important role in raising public awareness of the very serious issue of historical child sexual exploitation, giving a voice to victims and helping them get support and access to justice.

However, in too many places, even in this region of states bound by common principles and commitments, freedom of expression is restricted, journalists face intimidation, violence and death, and crimes against them go un-investigated. We therefore commend the RFOM and

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her office for their work to uphold this fundamental freedom, and call on all states to support them in their tireless work and to fully implement their OSCE and other international freedom of expression commitments. We owe this to the peoples of all our countries. As Dunja said earlier this week here in this hall: security and human rights go hand in hand.