



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Representative on Freedom of the Media
Dunja Mijatović

13 June 2013

Regular Report to the Permanent Council **for the period from 30 November 2012 to 13 June 2013**

Introduction

Internet freedom

A year ago I reported to the Permanent Council about the issues of our time – freedom and safety, online and off.

That report came on the heels of the Dublin Conference on Internet Freedom, which many of you may recall sparked a spirited debate about the future of the Internet. I wrote then that the 56 participating States held many opinions about what is an open, free and safe Internet. I wonder today if many opinions have changed in the past year.

I also wonder if we all aren't stuck as characters in the parable of the six blind men and the elephant, where we are often blind to the perceptions of others around us and prefer to consider the Internet as just what we feel in front of us.

In an attempt to bring some clarity and definition to the many issues that were posed in Dublin a year ago, my Office organized a major event, the Internet 2013 Conference here in Vienna in February. It turned out to be an ambitious undertaking with more than 400 participants onsite and several hundred more watching the live stream and taking part in Twitter chats. More than 60 news articles appeared reporting on the conference throughout the OSCE region.

Almost all participating States were represented as was every imaginable group with an interest in Internet development. I am pleased to report that the feedback on the event was positive throughout the delegations and the interest groups represented.

Based on the conference discussions I brought forth a set of specific recommendations designed to provide focus and some basic operating principles necessary to keep the Internet a vehicle to promote free expression, free media and the free flow of information.

Major points include:

- Affordable access to broadband Internet shall be fostered and become a universal service.

- The right to free expression and free media as human rights is not reserved for media companies or editorial offices alone; they belong to everyone. These rights shall be equally applicable to all forms of journalism, not just traditional media.
- In a world in which individuals communicate on public and semi-public platforms, a firm line between professional journalism and other methods of content production is not easily drawn. Collaborative works, such as wikis, make it difficult to identify a single author. They constitute journalistic content and shall enjoy the same protection as traditional journalism.
- No one shall be held liable for disseminating content on the Internet of which he or she is not the author, as long as they obey legal orders to remove that content, where they have the capacity to do so.
- Journalism codes of ethics and media self-regulatory bodies shall adapt to the online environment. Anyone involved in the production of information of public interest shall be allowed and encouraged to participate in self-regulatory mechanisms.
- The multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance needs to be preserved and enhanced so that it is truly representative of the public interest. The existing Internet governance infrastructure needs to evolve to ensure that the user is a recognized participant in the decision-making process.
- OSCE Institutions shall help participating States apply universally acceptable responses to reduce illegal content online by working with civil society to counter harmful narratives.
- In today's democratic societies, citizens shall be allowed to decide for themselves what they want to access on the Internet. As the right to disseminate and receive information is a basic human right, government-enforced mechanisms for filtering, labelling or blocking content shall not be acceptable.
- It is important to recognize the relationship between copyright and freedom of expression. We need a system that keeps a balance between the interests of rights holders and those of the public.

It is my firm belief that these straightforward recommendations are easy to acknowledge and just as easy to implement. And in doing so, our new technologies can be a catalyst to an age of increased information, open communication and the exchange of ideas through free media.

But in order to do so, the political will needs to be mustered to make to realize these recommendations. And today I am concerned that there is little or no political will to make this happen. Indeed, the opposite is true; too many in the OSCE simply refuse to believe there are problems related to media freedom in their countries.

Media freedom legal framework

In order for the Internet Conference recommendations to be implemented, it is imperative that the legal environment in participating States be tolerant and supportive of free media and free expression. Creating that kind of legal framework was the topic of the OSCE Human Dimension Seminar that was held on 13-15 May in Warsaw.

Across the OSCE region there is media-friendly legislation and there are laws in extreme need of reform, but reform is coming slowly at best. Journalists still face criminal defamation charges; laws restricting access to an open Internet are burgeoning; and there seems to be, to use that phrase again, a lack of political will to create media-friendly societies. Indeed, in some participating States, it's as if war has been declared on journalists, bloggers and Social Media activists.

It is time for the participating States to act, to show the will, to solve the problems. Within the last few years the United Nations Human Rights Council and the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe have adopted resolutions on Internet freedom and journalists' safety. It is time for the OSCE participating States to follow suit.

Journalists' safety

A year ago I said that making newsgathering safer was a critical maker for my Office in the 21st century. I also said that I sensed that a critical mass of public awareness and international organizations' attention could turn words into deeds.

I am sorry to say my faith may have been misplaced. Today's report, which covers little more than six months of activities, shows:

- At least 21 members of the media have been assaulted and injured by unidentified assailants.
- At least 10 members of the media have been jailed or put in short-term detention for doing their jobs.
- At least five journalists have been jailed or are serving time in prison on criminal defamation charges.

Shockingly, however, a new category of harassment is growing – the almost indiscriminate and excessive use of force by law enforcement personnel against media who are reporting on public demonstrations.

This situation must change and it must change immediately. And to make it happen, all that is necessary is, to use the phrase again – the political will to make it happen. There is no need for many new laws. There is no need for intense work of fact-finding commissions and complex regulations that govern conduct. Law enforcement personnel must be told that it's "hands off the media."

Finally, I am looking forward to the 15th Central Asia Media Conference in Bishkek later this month. We will have an opportunity to reflect on developments in the region over that period of time and what we can look forward to in the future.

Issues raised with participating States

Albania

On 2 December I received a letter from Edmond Panariti, Minister of Foreign Affairs, indicating that criminal charges against journalist Lindita Cela would be dropped on 3 December in compliance with Article 5 of the Law on Amnesty (see Regular Report to the Permanent Council of 29 November 2012). I have learned that charges were indeed dropped on 3 December.

On **1 March** I wrote to Prime Minister Sali Berisha expressing concern about the draft Law on Broadcasting, indicating the law, as adopted by the Education and Mass Media Committee, falls short of requiring politically inclusive governing bodies for the national broadcast regulator, NCRT, and the public broadcaster, RTSH, therefore risking that both institutions would remain political instruments of the parliamentary majority. My Office will continue to monitor the implementation of the new legislation.

Armenia

On **25 April** I wrote to Edward Nalbandian, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to raise the matter of Hakob Karapetyan, a reporter for iLur.am, who was attacked on 23 April as he was covering an election campaign event. Karapetyan was physically assaulted and his camera was seized and returned with all video files erased. The journalist said that policemen present at the site did not intervene. I also raised the case of Hripsimeh Jebejyan, a reporter for the newspaper Aravot, who reportedly was mistreated by police while covering a clash between protesters and police on 8 April.

On 23 May I received a letter from Deputy Foreign Minister Ashot Hovakimian regarding the above-mentioned cases. I welcome the fact that the investigations in both cases were conducted swiftly and, in the Karapetyan case, sanctions were imposed on two police officers.

Azerbaijan

On **28 December** I issued a public statement welcoming the release from prison of Anar Bayramli, an Azerbaijan-based correspondent for Iranian Sahar TV, Aydin Janiyev, a regional correspondent for the newspaper Khural and blogger Taleh Khasmammadov, who were pardoned by a 26 December decree by President Ilham Aliyev. I called the release a commendable step and expressed hope that all journalists in prison would be set free.

On **15 January** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Elmar Mammadyarov and Minister of Internal Affairs Ramil Usubov and issued a public statement expressing concern about the use of excessive police force against several journalists during a public protest in Baku. I asked the authorities to investigate and take measures to prevent similar incidents. In my letter I suggested to the authorities that we continue joint projects on journalists' safety.

On 21 January and 13 February I received replies from the Ministry of Internal Affairs saying that a rally held on 12 January "was not conducted in accordance with the determined

provisions of the law” and the “police had taken necessary measures in line with the law to restore public order without distinction to participants of the rally.”

On **18 February** I wrote to Foreign Minister Mammadyarov to express concern about the safety of novelist Akram Aylisli and his family. Because of his writing, Aylisli has become a target of threats, harassment and sanctions. I welcomed the immediate condemnation of the acts by Minister of Internal Affairs Ramil Usubov and asked the authorities to guarantee safety for Aylisli and for all journalists and authors in Azerbaijan.

On 28 February I received a reply from the authorities regarding the matter.

On **13 March** I wrote to Foreign Minister Mammadyarov to express concern over the nine-year prison sentence imposed on Avaz Zeynalli, editor of the newspaper Khural. Zeynalli was found guilty of several charges including “taking bribes and extortion,” “not implementing a court ruling” and “evasion of taxes.” I also expressed concern that two other journalists, Vugar Qonaqov and Zaur Quliyev from Hayal TV in Guba, who are in prison awaiting trial, may receive lengthy sentences.

I also again raised the matter of the fate of the newspaper Azadliq, which may be forced to close because of two civil defamation judgments with high damage awards.

On **15 March** I wrote to the Foreign Minister welcoming the release of Qonaqov and Quliyev from prison. I am relieved that the two journalists could finally join their families and I remain hopeful that the suspended convictions will be vacated. I also asked for information regarding the detention of Rashad Hasanov, a well-known social media activist.

On **10 April** I asked the authorities for the reason Russian journalist Milrad Fatullayev, editor-in-chief of weekly Nastoyasheye Vremya and a contributor to Nezavisimaya Gazeta, was denied entry into the country on 25 March.

On **11 April** I wrote to Foreign Minister Mammadyarov regarding several media developments. I raised the case of Araz Guliyev, editor of the news website xeber44, who was sentenced to eight years in prison for "illegal possession, storage, and transportation of firearms," "participation in activities that disrupt public order," "inciting ethnic and religious hatred," "resisting authority" and "offensive action against the flag and emblem of Azerbaijan."

I expressed hope that the Guliyev conviction, as well as that of Avaz Zeynalli (see entry of 13 March), who was sentenced to nine years in prison, would be overturned on appeal.

I sincerely hope that these two journalists and all other journalists in prison will be released, including Hilal Mammadov, chief editor of the Talysh-language newspaper, Tolishi Sado, Nijat Aliyev of the website azadxeber.az and Faramaz Allahverdiyev, an independent journalist.

I also expressed concern over statements by several officials who called for blocking the social media site Facebook and I expressed hope that, as I was assured personally by President Aliyev during a visit to Baku in 2011, the Internet would remain free in Azerbaijan.

Using the example of Azadliq, I pointed out the need to reform criminal and civil defamation laws and once again I offered my Office's full support for that task.

On **29 April** I wrote to Ali Hasanov, Head of the Presidential Administration's Public-Political Affairs Department, regarding a new smear campaign against well-known investigative journalist Khadija Ismayilova.

On **15 May** I issued a public statement expressing concern about the increasingly hostile situation for the media, citing several negative developments. On 14 May the Parliament adopted amendments to the Criminal Code that provide for up to three years imprisonment for online defamation. These amendments drive Azerbaijan even further away from the OSCE's recommendations to decriminalize defamation and I urged President Aliyev not to sign the legislation. I also criticized the 13 May decision of the Baku Appeals Court upholding a nine-year prison sentence for Avaz Zeynalli, editor-in-chief of Khural newspaper. I once again called on the authorities to release Zeynalli and other jailed journalists. In my statement I also noted other limitations on media freedom in Azerbaijan, including the recent intimidation of a Radio Free Europe journalist, Khadija Ismayilova, and disproportional damage awards for defamation against the newspaper Azadliq. I find such developments particularly worrying in the run up to the presidential and parliamentary elections.

On 4 June President Aliyev signed the aforementioned amendments to the Criminal Code extending the application of criminal defamation provisions to online expression.

On **6 June** together with Nils Muižnieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, I issued a public statement regretting this step, which clearly contradicts Azerbaijan's commitments and obligations relating to the decriminalization of defamation and freedom of expression in general. We furthermore expressed concern that the changes will further erode the already limited space for free expression in the country. We strongly urged the Azerbaijani authorities to employ genuine efforts to ensure that the ongoing reform of the defamation law results in legislation that complies fully with the European Convention on Human Rights and OSCE commitments on freedom of the media, both online and offline.

I hope that the recent negative developments regarding media freedom and freedom of expression in Azerbaijan can be stopped and I offer my Office's full support and assistance.

Belarus

On **6 December** while attending the OSCE Ministerial Council in Dublin, I met with Aleksandr Mikhnevich, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and shared my concern about the fragile state of independent media and the safety of independent journalists in Belarus. I appreciated the open conversation centered on the current state of affairs and future co-operation between the authorities and my Office.

On **20 December** I wrote to the authorities to express concern over the 12 December decision of the Ministry of Information to deny reregistration to the magazine Arche. On 24 May I was pleased to learn that Arche was reregistered by the Ministry of Information on 22 May. The editors intend to resume publication immediately.

I was pleased to learn that on 15 March criminal charges of libelling the president were dropped against Gazeta Wyborcza journalist Andrzej Poczobut and on 18 April criminal charges of complicity in organizing an illegal crossing of the border were dropped against independent photographer Anton Suryapin.

On **13 May** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Makei to express concern about the detention and conviction of Alyaksandr Yarashevich, a reporter for Radio Ratsiya, and blogger Dmitrii Galko. They were detained by the police on 6 May while walking down a street in Minsk. Yarashevich was sentenced to 12 days and Galko to 10 days of administrative arrest for disobeying lawful orders. It was the second detention of Yarashevich within the last 10 days; he was detained by the police on 26 April together with other six journalists covering an event on the anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. His colleague, Radio Ratsiya reporter Gennady Barbarych, and he received three-day sentences.

On 30 May I noted the adoption in a first reading by the lower chamber of the Parliament of amendments to the law “On information, informatization and protection of information” that may improve access of official information to citizens.

On **3-5 June** I paid an official visit to Minsk. I was honored to follow up on the invitation by Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei and I welcome the readiness of the authorities to intensify dialogue and co-operation with her office on much-needed improvement of the media freedom situation. On the first day of my visit I opened a training seminar on “Internet Media: Freedom, Professionalism, Sustainability” that was attended by independent and state journalists.

(See Training)

I was pleased for the opportunity to voice all my concerns regarding the media freedom situation at the highest level. I appealed to the authorities to immediately end the short-term detention of journalists and social media activists covering public events. While noting the positive developments in the criminal cases against Poczobut and Anton Syriapin, I reiterated my demand that remaining criminal charges against journalists should be dropped. I also noted that the media legislation framework urgently needs to be liberalized and modernized to enable development and independence of the media. In this regard, I received positive signals from the authorities about the engagement of my Office to assist in legislative reform, especially with the outdated and restrictive media law. I also insisted on the urgent need to engage civil society in this reform process. All my meetings with the authorities were held in a very frank and constructive manner.

My visit also allowed for the opportunity to meet with many journalists and civil society representatives.

I left Minsk with high expectations for improvement in the media freedom situation. I will continue to monitor and engage in the much-needed reform process and hope that our agreement to co-operate will soon bring positive results. My Office stands ready to continue to assist and co-operate with Belarus.

(See Visits)

On **11 June** I wrote to the Belarusian authorities regarding the detention of Nash Dom newspaper distributor Natalya Leonova. Reportedly, on 5 June, Leonova was detained by the Minsk District Police Unit for about two hours and allegedly intimidated for distributing newspapers. Police confiscated 700 copies of the newspaper.

As a first step in [improving the situation and stopping](#) the practice of short-term detentions, I suggested that the authorities at the highest level provide law enforcement agencies with specific guidelines to stop detaining and harassing journalists and members of the media.

I once again expressed my readiness to support the authorities with all means available to improve the media freedom situation.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

On **9 December** together with the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EU Delegation, the EU Special Representative and the U.S. Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, I issued a statement on recent efforts to replace the entire RTV FBiH (Radio Television of Federation of BiH) Steering Board, an act that could undermine media freedom in the country.

In the statement, I also recalled the legal reviews commissioned by my Office to assist in establishing a media framework that allows for politically and financially independent public service broadcasters and a broadcast regulator.

On **14 January** I issued a public statement expressing concern about amendments to the legislation on public broadcasting that would create another public service broadcaster, thus damaging the financial sustainability of the current public broadcasting system.

Instead of creating new broadcasters, I suggested that authorities strengthen the independence and professionalism of the existing public service broadcasters. I also raised the issue of an urgent need and the importance of starting the process of the digital switchover.

I expressed concern that none of the recommendations that were contained in two legal reviews commissioned by my Office, the European Union Special Representative and the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina had been considered.

On January 15 I received a letter from Minister of Communications and Transport Damir Hadžić extending an invitation for me to visit the Ministry, suggesting co-operation between the Ministry and my Office and to discuss media freedom issues in the country.

On **30 January** and **14 March** I replied to Minister Hadžić thanking him for his letter and wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Zlatko Lagumdžija, referring to the agreement and written correspondence with Minister Hadžić, to inform him about my intention to pay an official visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina this year.

On **16 April** I issued a public statement voicing concern about threats against journalists Predrag Lucić and Nebojša Vukanović. I called on the authorities to condemn such threats and ensure journalists' safety. I reminded the authorities that different views need to be accepted and fostered and that there can be no excuse for attacks that endanger free expression and free media.

On **4 June** I wrote to the authorities emphasizing possible consequences of adopting the recently drafted amendments to the Law on Freedom of Access to Information of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I also provided them with a legal analysis of the draft law commissioned by my Office and prepared by Helen Darbshire, executive director of Access Info Europe and a well-known international expert on access to information. She was also a member of the drafting committee of the first Bosnia and Herzegovina Law on Freedom of Access to Information.

On **4 June** I issued a public statement expressing a concern about access to information law amendments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, since several provisions were not in line with international standards on access to information laws, particularly Article 8.2.

I expressed hope that the recommendations from the legal analysis would assist the authorities in bringing the law in line with the country's OSCE commitments and international standards on freedom of information.

(See Legal reviews)

Croatia

On **24 January** I wrote to Vesna Pusic, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, expressing concern over the detention of Jasna Babic on 22 January as a result of an ongoing criminal libel lawsuit against her initiated in 2009 by businessman Josip Radeljak. Although the Court decided to release Ms. Babic, she could have spent a maximum of 30 days in custody. While Croatia failed to decriminalize defamation when it last reformed the Criminal Code, I expressed hope that the government will reinvigorate its efforts to do so.

On **20 March** I issued a public statement voicing concern over the treatment of three journalists at Croatian Radio Television's (HRT) news program. Katja Kusec, presenter of the evening news show Dnevnik 3, and two of Dnevnik 3's editors, Ruzica Renic and Denis Latin, were replaced after airing comments by Ruza Tomasic, an MP and head of the Croatian Party of Rights, Ante Starcevic.

I urged HRT's management to ensure that professional standards are upheld and that the rights of Latin, Kušec and Renić are protected. I also called on the government and HRT management to refrain from any action that could lead to censorship and threaten editorial independence.

On 26 March I received a letter from HRT in response to a public statement I made on 20 March. The letter stated that the decision to relieve three journalists of their positions was not linked to media freedom but rather to the lack of their professionalism as journalists.

Denmark

On **23 May** I issued a public statement concerning a new public information law proposed in Denmark. I raised my concern that the new law would restrict the public's access to information in the legislative process.

The proposed law contains two sections that could have consequences for access to information in the political and law-making processes. The proposed law also fails to contain a provision that establishes a “harm test,” which means that information that would not in any way harm the functioning of the government can still be withheld. I asked members of Parliament to reject the two sections in the bill.

On 4 June the Parliament passed the bill, which will go into effect on 1 January 2014.

Georgia

On **6-7 December** I met with Maia Panjikidze, Minister of Foreign Affairs, while attending the OSCE Ministerial Council in Dublin. I expressed my appreciation for the country’s achievements in media freedom, especially the adoption of media-friendly legislation, including decriminalization of defamation, the creation of a public service broadcaster and, most recently, the adoption of legislation ensuring transparency of media ownership.

On **20 December** I wrote to Foreign Minister Panjikidze to request additional information regarding Nikoloz Gvaramia, the director general of Rustavi-2 TV, who was arrested on 19 December. I expressed hope that his arrest is not connected to his work at Rustavi-2 TV and called for transparent investigation.

On **21 December** I wrote again to Foreign Minister Panjikidze to express concern over developments at Georgian Public Broadcasting (GPB) and the resignation of Director General Gia Chanturia. I sought assurance that the selection of a new director general would be carried out fairly. On 4 January I received a letter from the Foreign Minister informing me that Giorgi Baratashvili, the former Head of the GPB Technical Department, was found the best suited among 140 candidates.

On **21 January** I wrote to Foreign Minister Panjikidze offering to provide a legal review of proposed amendments to the Law on Broadcasting and on 25 March I delivered the review.

The review, requested by the deputies of the Parliament, indicates that the proposed amendments improve the current law and ensure greater pluralism and transparency in the work of the public broadcaster. Redefining the tasks, duties and appointment procedure of the Director General and the Board of Trustees also is an improvement. It is also very positive that the public broadcaster will have the new obligation of carrying the signal of other broadcasters as part of its network. The main shortcoming of the draft is the lack of transitional provisions until the new Board is appointed. These should be introduced to ensure the full functioning of the broadcaster during the transition.

(See Legal reviews)

Germany

On **10 April** I issued a public statement saying that broader media access to the trial of a member of the alleged terrorist group National Socialist Underground would be in the public interest. Media access to the trial of crimes in which eight victims were of Turkish and one of Greek origin was originally allocated on a first-come, first-served basis and resulted in Turkish-language media being excluded.

In my statement I welcomed the pre-trial debate on the issue and noted that in cases where indispensable elements of democracies clash, such as, in this case, judicial independence and journalists' access to information, it is important to learn from the cases and develop policies that enforce these basic rights.

I noted the Federal Constitutional Court decision of 12 April ruling that the court needed to reserve seats for foreign media in view of the nationalities of the victims.

On **6 June** in a letter to Boris Rhein, Interior Minister, and Jörg-Uwe Hahn, Minister of Justice for the State of Hessen, and in a public statement I expressed concern about police treatment of the media. On 1 June riot police who were dispatched to monitor "Blockupy" protesters in Frankfurt assaulted media members reporting on the event.

I noted that it was the second incident where journalists' rights were infringed upon by the police, arising from reporting on demonstrations in Frankfurt. In another incident on 6 February police raided the homes of eight photojournalists in different federal states to find evidence of a crime that happened at a demonstration in Frankfurt in March 2012 in which a policeman was seriously injured.

Greece

On **16 January** I issued a public statement condemning firebomb attacks outside journalists' homes on 11 January in the greater Athens area. The targets were all well-known journalists Antonis Skyllakos of the Athens News Agency and his journalist wife, Evangelia Baltatzis, Antonis Liaros, of ERT public television, Petros Karsiotis of Alpha TV, Giorgos Ekonomeas of Mega TV and Christos Konstas, a former journalist and current spokesman for the state privatization agency. No one was injured. Two groups, the Militant Minority and the Circle of Violators, claimed responsibility for the attacks in announcements posted on their websites.

I was pleased to learn of the condemnation of the attacks by the authorities and I called for a thorough investigation.

On 3 April I received a reply from the authorities to my letter dated 19 November concerning an assault in Athens on Skai TV reporter Michael Tezaris. The authorities said an investigation was started but the perpetrators have not been identified.

On **19 April** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Dimitris Avramopoulos and issued a public statement about an assault on Skai TV sports journalist George Tselikas, who was severely beaten outside a football stadium in Athens on 14 April. The incident occurred during a 15-minute strike action in protest of previous incidents of violence against sports journalists.

I emphasized that assaults on journalists constitute a serious threat to their safety and harm media freedom. I asked the authorities to publicly condemn this and every case of violence against journalists to send a clear message that such assaults are not tolerated.

On 7 June I received the reply of the authorities regarding the assault against sports journalist Tselikas, saying that an investigation is under way. The authorities said my Office would be kept informed about the developments.

On **11 June** I wrote to the authorities, asking for information on the entry ban to Greece of journalist Ivana Kosovska of Skopje. According to information available to me, the journalist, who works as foreign policy editor of the daily newspaper 'Dnevnik' in Skopje, was declared *persona non grata* and recorded as such in the Greek national register.

On the same day, the authorities sent my Office an initial reply stating that on 5 June the Head of Greece's Liaison Office in Skopje met with Foreign Minister Nikola Poposki concerning the case of journalist Kosovska to express the view that the issue exclusively concerns Greek internal law and order. The authorities also informed my Office that the matter is considered closed following discussions between Foreign Ministers Dimitris Avramopoulos and Nikola Poposki.

On **12 June** I issued a public statement warning that the closure of Greece's public service broadcaster, ERT, could deprive citizens of a diversity of views and create economic hardship for the dismissed journalists. On the evening of 11 June the government suddenly shut down the three television channels and radio services of ERT in the frame of wider state budget cuts. I urged the authorities to ensure the immediate establishment of the new public broadcaster, guarantee its full editorial, financial and political independence. I also noted that the decision to close ERT should have been taken in consultation with all stakeholders, including media professionals and civil society and this move also left viewers without a public service broadcaster. I emphasized that the authorities should have gradually restructured the public broadcaster, especially as they announced that they would resume operations at a later date.

My Office continues to follow the trial of journalist Kostas Vaxevanis, whose case I raised on **2 November**. Vaxevanis was charged with violating national privacy laws by publishing the names of more than 2,000 Greek nationals who allegedly have Swiss bank accounts for tax evasion purposes. His trial has been postponed to 8 October.

Hungary

On 13 December I received a reply from the authorities to my letter of 19 November, in which I asked for information on certain new draft provisions of the Criminal Code that Hungarian media experts claimed would make it possible for the government to remove illegal online content and block access to certain information before a court decision is made. I also asked for details about a criminal libel case launched by a Budapest district mayor against two persons who posted online comments to an article written in the daily newspaper Nepszava about the mayor in April 2012.

The authorities said that the reason for the adoption of the new sanction, called "definite removal of electronic data," is to combat cybercrime. It will be part of the Criminal Code that would go into effect on 1 July, and could be ordered by the court when the accessibility or publication of electronic data cause a crime; the electronic data is used as an instrument for the commission of a criminal act or the data is created by way of a criminal act. A similar measure is created in the Act on Criminal Procedure that would allow for temporary blocking, ordered by the court, until a final decision of the court. It could be used in case of

child pornography, terrorist acts and crimes against the state. The letter emphasized that it is the responsibility of the state to help the victims, save its citizens and prevent these serious criminal acts. They added that progressiveness is the central idea of the system and blocking or removal always will be based on a court order.

Regarding the criminal libel case, in the letter the authorities informed me that the government was not in a position to provide information about an ongoing procedure.

Italy

On 21 December I received a reply from now Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Maria Dassú to my 16 November letter regarding a bill to re-criminalize libel and the criminal conviction of editor Alelsandro Sallusti for defamation. Dassú indicated that all relevant actors would be consulted in the legislative process and said my message had been forwarded to relevant ministers.

On **27 December** I wrote to Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata, Minister of Foreign Affairs, expressing my concern about threats to media in northern Italy. A letter to the daily newspaper Altomilanese contained a 9-mm bullet and photographs of editor Ersilio Mattioni and reporter Giampiero Sebri, who is known for his coverage of organized crime. I called on authorities to condemn such acts and requested additional information on the case.

On 7 January I received a reply from the authorities indicating officials are investigating the incident.

On **21 March** I wrote to the Foreign Minister about journalist Alessandro Iacueli, who is known for his reporting on organized crime. Iacueli was the victim of a burglary in which only the journalist's work product was stolen. I raised the Altomilanese case again and stressed the importance of combating threats to journalists by organized crime.

On 10 April I received a reply from the authorities regarding the Iacueli case in which they reiterated a commitment to address all threats to free media and journalists.

On **10 April** I wrote to the authorities and issued a public statement condemning the delivery of a parcel bomb to the Turin office of newspaper La Stampa on 9 April. Stressing the uncompromising stance authorities take against violence, I welcomed the show of support for the newspaper by President Giorgio Napolitano.

On **24 May** I wrote to Emma Bonino, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and on 27 May I issued a public statement reiterating my concern about the enforcement of criminal defamation laws in Italy. On 22 May the Court of Milan sentenced journalists Andrea Marcenaro, Giorgio Mulé and Riccardo Arena to one year in prison, eight months in prison and a suspended one year of imprisonment, respectively, for defaming Palermo magistrate Francesco Messineo. I hoped that a higher court would take into account the case law established by the European Court of Human rights in reviewing the case and once again encouraged the government to repeal criminal defamation laws.

On 5 June I received a reply from Foreign Minister Bonino assuring me that the government attached primary importance to freedom of expression and media. She furthermore highlighted the ongoing and extremely lively debate on the decriminalization of defamation

in the Parliament. She said that the government was closely following the parliamentary reform proposals and that several ministries were discussing the issue.

Kazakhstan

On **25 January** I wrote to the authorities asking for information about the closure of the Zhezkazgan-based newspaper Molodezhnaya Gazeta. On 22 January the editor-in-chief and owner and the staff of the newspaper were informed that, following a decree issued by the Ministry of Culture and Information, the registration of the newspaper was cancelled.

On 29 January I received an answer from the authorities on cases involving several media outlets that are facing closure on charges of extremism, which was mentioned in my Regular Report to the Permanent Council of 29 November 2012. I was told that, according to a court verdict based on a series of legal examinations, “the conceptual content of channel K+, the web portals Stan-TV and Respublika and the newspapers Respublika, Golos Respubliki and Vzglyad are designed to incite social discord.” I was also told that “content analysis of K+ television programs, articles in the newspapers Vzglyad and Golos Respubliki, the Internet portals Respublika and Stan-TV and other materials demonstrated the presence of propaganda advocating overthrow of the government and undermining of the securing of the State.”

As a result of the court proceedings, more than 30 media outlets were closed. I regret these developments which I see as a serious setback to media pluralism in Kazakhstan. While I will never question the fight of governments to vigorously fight security threats, they should not compromise media freedom.

On **30 January** I brought to the attention of Dariga Nazarbayeva, Chairperson of the Parliamentary (Majilis) Committee on Social-Cultural Affairs, my Office’s concerns regarding draft amendments to the Criminal Code.

In the letter I mentioned that, if adopted, these provisions will severely restrict free expression. I encourage all countries to do away with criminal defamation laws, especially those providing extra protection for public officials, including heads of state. Civil defamation statutes also should be reformed. In Kazakhstan journalists have faced exorbitant civil defamation claims and disproportionately high damages have been awarded to public officials. This practice is punitive and incompatible with the right of free expression. Damage awards should not bankrupt journalists and media organizations. Indeed, public officials should have a higher level of tolerance against criticism and accept that their positions subject them to public scrutiny.

In the same letter I provided Chairperson Nazarbayeva with the legal analysis of the draft law “On the protection of children from information harmful to their health and development,” which is under consideration in the Majilis. I presented the analysis to Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov and I hope that this analysis, commissioned by my Office and prepared by an independent legal expert, will be considered before the law is adopted.

My Office stands ready to continue support for media law reform in Kazakhstan.

Kyrgyzstan

On **6 December** at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Dublin I met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Erlan Abdyldaev. We had a constructive exchange of views on the state of media in Kyrgyzstan and agreed to continue our efforts to strengthen media freedom in the country.

On **8 January** I wrote to Foreign Minister Abdyldaev to express my concern and ask for more information about the brutal attack on two Public Television journalists, Burulay Pusurmankulova and Shirin Asanakunova, on 7 January in Bishkek. I welcomed the fact that President Almazbek Atambaev and the Bishkek police chief pledged to lead the investigation into this crime personally. On 23 January I was informed by the authorities that case was settled by mutual agreement.

On **12 April** I issued a public statement welcoming restoration of access to the news website fergananews.com (see Regular Report to the Permanent Council of 29 March 2012) and called it a positive sign for Internet freedom. I have repeatedly raised the issue with the authorities and I am pleased that the readers have access to the site again.

I look forward to my next visit to Bishkek on 27-28 June for the 15th Central Asia Media Conference.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

On **3 April** I wrote to the Minister of Information Society and Administration, Ivo Ivanovski, and Nikola Poposki, Minister of Foreign Affairs, expressing concern about a new media law has been drafted and the procedures for adoption.

On 13 May I received a reply from Minister Ivanovski setting forth the consultation process and assuring me that the public consultations shall continue as long as comments are submitted.

On **22 May** I wrote to Minister Ivanovski indicating my Office would provide a legal review of the draft law.

On **30 May** I provided Minister Ivanovski and Foreign Minister Poposki with a comprehensive legal review of the new draft Law on Media and Audiovisual Media Services, commissioned by my Office and prepared by Professor Katrin Nyman-Metcalf, a well-known international expert in communications law, who has previously analysed several laws across the OSCE region. I welcomed some positive elements in the draft law “On Media and Audiovisual Media Services,” but in the letter and in a public statement, I expressed concern that the draft law would restrict media freedom in the country because of the risk of over-regulation and the existence of unnecessary restrictions that would apply to online and offline media.

(See Legal reviews)

On **31 May** I issued a public statement condemning the detention of Tomislav Kezarovski, an investigative journalist at the daily newspaper Nova Makedonija, because an article he wrote in 2008 for Reporter 92 magazine revealed the identity of a witness in a murder case.

I stressed that even in cases where there were issues of confidentiality or witness protection, the detention of journalists is excessive.

Moldova

On **5 February** in a letter to Iurie Leanca, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, I expressed concern about the overly lengthy and nontransparent process in the appeal by the NIT television channel of the revocation of its licence by the Audiovisual Coordinating Council in April 2012. A hearing on the appeal has been postponed six times in the last 10 months. The latest hearing was scheduled for 28 January, but it was postponed again until 11 February.

The Court of Appeals reviewed the case and upheld the license revocation on 11 February, which decision was affirmed on 2 May by the Supreme Court. Lawyers for NIT indicated that they are in the process of drafting a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights. I continue to monitor the situation.

Montenegro

On **28 May** I issued a public statement on the ninth anniversary of the murder of journalist Duško Jovanović and urged the authorities to end the impunity against journalists' attackers. I welcomed the fact that there is an ongoing investigation and said that I continue to monitor the case.

Jovanović, who was editor-in-chief and owner of the daily newspaper Dan, was shot and killed while leaving his office in Podgorica on 27 May 2004. He had frequently published critical news articles and also received numerous death threats prior to his murder.

I will continue to monitor the case of Jovanović and I also continue to follow all other cases in OSCE participating States where journalists have been killed in relation to their work.

Romania

On **7 May** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Titus Corlăţean and issued a public statement expressing concern about a 29 April decision of the Constitutional Court overturning a High Court of Cassation and Justice ruling in 2010 which had effectively decriminalized insult and libel in Romania.

I noted that in 2006 my Office welcomed Parliament passing a law that decriminalized defamation and, in April 2009, the Office publicly expressed hope that decriminalizing defamation would create a balance between the media's right to scrutinize public figures and protecting a person's reputation.

The recent ruling runs against these efforts and constitutes a significant step back. Since lawmakers are currently considering other Constitutional reforms, I hope they will take this opportunity to decriminalize speech offenses expressly in the Constitution.

Russian Federation

On **7 December** I issued a public statement expressing my concern over the death of television reporter Kazbek Gekkiyev, who was murdered on 5 December in the southern republic of Kabardino-Balkaria. I welcomed the swift condemnation of this crime at the

highest levels and the decision to immediately dispatch a team of investigators to investigate the murder.

On **11 December** I wrote to the authorities requesting more information about criminal proceedings started against Aksana Panova, the founder and former chief editor of the Ura.ru in Yekaterinburg, the biggest news agency in the Urals region. While I do not challenge legitimate actions of the prosecution, I am concerned about the possibility of Panova's conviction for her work as a critical journalist.

On 30 January the authorities responded to my letter regarding the Panova case, saying the fraud and extortion charges against her are not connected to her professional activities. I will continue to closely follow developments in the case.

On **13 December** I issued a public statement welcoming a resolution adopted by the Plenum of the Supreme Court that would guarantee courtrooms be open to journalists in most situations. I said the resolution could help improve the transparency of the judiciary and strengthen the watchdog function of the media. According to the resolution "On openness of court proceedings and access to information on activities of courts," obstructing the lawful work of journalists by refusing them access to courtrooms on any grounds other than the limited number of exceptions specifically mentioned in the law, including on the grounds that they are not accredited, is unacceptable.

In the resolution the Supreme Court also acknowledges that journalists, like all citizens, have the right to report online, take notes and make audio recordings during court sessions. Only when they wish to make video recordings, take photographs or broadcast live online or by radio or television will they be required to secure the authorization of the presiding judge. In addition, banning such recordings would be acceptable only for the protection of fundamental human rights. Any restrictions on the media must be legitimate and recorded in the court minutes.

I welcome this initiative of the Supreme Court, which represents another important step in ensuring access to court proceedings which increases the ability of reporters to investigate such matters.

On **19 February** I wrote to the authorities regarding the largest Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) cyber-attack on the English-language website of the television company Russia Today in its history. I expressed my concern as this was not the first time media outlets in Russia have experienced such attacks. I asked the authorities to investigate such that actions against media websites are efficiently prevented in the future. As I have noted before, DDoS attacks on media outlets obstruct and hinder news reporting and are a threat to cyber security, which is one of the vital conditions for free media as a whole.

On **14 March** I met with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Aleksey Meshkov after his address to the Permanent Council. We discussed issues of common interest. I am pleased that we agreed to increase our co-operation and dialogue.

On **8 April** I issued a public statement expressing sorrow over the death of journalist Mikhail Beketov. A savage attack in 2008 left him permanently paralyzed and unable to speak. Just last year he was awarded the governmental prize for dedication to the profession. I offered my condolences to Beketov's relatives, colleagues and friends. I regretted that he did not live

to see his attackers brought to justice. I repeat my call to the authorities to track down and prosecute those responsible for the attack.

On **9 April** I issued a public statement voicing my concern about unannounced inspections of media NGOs. I called on the authorities to end these exceptional measures and allow the NGOs to continue their work for the benefit of the media and society. Media NGOs provide essential support to journalists and the entire media industry, promoting the free flow of information and free expression. Any actions to intimidate them and interfere with their activities could create a chilling effect on those who champion freedom of the media. While all organizations need to observe the rule of law, I see no need to put such heavy pressure on these NGOs. I called on the authorities to show restraint.

Affected NGOs include, among others, the Mass Media Defence Centre in Voronezh, Civil Control, the Institute of Regional Press and the Foundation for Freedom of Information in Saint Petersburg and the Institute for Development of Press (Siberia) in Novosibirsk.

I note the progress in the case of Igor Domnikov, an investigative reporter for Novaya Gazeta, who was murdered in 2000. On 8 May Pavel Sopot, a businessman, was arrested for the crime. This arrest is certainly a development but much more needs to be done to apprehend those involved in killing journalists in Russia.

Serbia

On **3 December** I wrote to Slobodan Igrutinovic, Secretary General of the Association of Sport Journalists of Serbia, in response to his 7 November letter in which he described the situation regarding the ownership and licensing of TV Arena sport.

In my discussions with the authorities I stressed that full withdrawal of the state from media is crucial for the country's media reform and indispensable for a functioning free media environment.

On **30 January** I issued a public statement welcoming the establishment of a commission to assess progress in the investigations of unsolved murders of journalists and emphasized that the government needed to step up its own efforts to protect journalists. I hope it will help to ensure that justice is served and will raise awareness of the issue of journalists' safety.

On **11 April**, on the occasion of the 14th anniversary of the murder of Serbian journalist Slavko Ćuruvija, I issued a public statement indicating that the authorities have a duty to publicly condemn violence against journalists and ensure that both perpetrators and masterminds are prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

I continue to monitor the Ćuruvija case and I also continue to follow all cases in OSCE countries where journalists were killed because of their work. The families, friends and colleagues of these journalists, as well as the societies as a whole, deserve to know the truth.

On **11 June** I issued a news release noting the 12th anniversary of the murder of journalist Milan Pantić outside of his home in Jagodina. His assailants have not been identified.

I again said I welcomed the founding of an international commission by the government to investigate the unsolved murders of journalists.

Slovakia

On **2 May** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Miroslav Lajčák and issued a public statement expressing concern over recent cases where the media have come under significant pressure by members of the Slovak judiciary.

Several current and former members of the judiciary, including the acting General Prosecutor and four Supreme Court judges, are seeking damages totaling €40,000 from the daily newspaper Nový Čas and its publisher for photos and videos published in June 2011. These materials depict a party at which the plaintiffs were allegedly mimicking the events in a mass murder that happened in 2010 in Bratislava. The plaintiffs say that the photos were falsified and that there was no connection between the photos and the mass murder.

In another case, Judge Michal Truban sued the daily newspaper Sme, claiming that an article published by the newspaper in September 2012 had impugned his honour and infringed upon his privacy by alleging the judge accepted a free hunting trip in 2008. Truban asked for three separate apologies from Sme and €150,000 in damages.

The court ordered the newspaper to apologize to the judge in capital letters on its front page for three consecutive days in late April. The court has not yet ruled on the damage award.

I warned that large damage awards can lead to an outlet's bankruptcy and may induce self-censorship, thus diminishing the existing media pluralism in Slovakia. I emphasized that public officials need to endure a higher threshold of criticism by the public, including members of the media. I also noted that that one of the indispensable roles of the media in democracies is to hold a mirror to society and inform people of all issues of public importance.

On 24 May I received a reply from Foreign Minister Lajčák, sharing the view that public officials need to endure a higher threshold of criticism by the public and that damage awards should be proportional to the injury suffered.

The Foreign Minister also noted the close linkage between freedom of expression and protection of personal integrity, as also confirmed by the case law of the European Court of Human Rights under Article 10 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. He further noted that the issue of damage caps in civil defamation cases is one of the topics discussed at relevant expert fora.

I hope that the discussions that have already started in Slovakia about the need to decriminalize libel and defamation will soon lead to this very important reform, and that a damage cap will be set in civil defamation cases.

Slovenia

On 30 November I received a reply (to my letter of 15 November expressing concern about a rise in the value-added tax to be assessed on newspapers) from Gregor Virant, President of the National Assembly, in which he stated that he was personally advocating a solution that was different from the presented proposal for amending the legislation and that the committee did not adopt the articles of the draft act amending the Value Added Tax Act.

On **23 May** I wrote to Karl Erjavec, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to express concern over two negative developments.

On 10 April the car of Miran Šubic, an investigative reporter for the daily Dnevnik, was set on fire outside his home in the northern city of Kranj. Šubic is known for reporting about corruption and criminal activity in the area. I asked the authorities to provide me with further detail about this incident.

Additionally, on 13 May blogger Mitja Kunstelj was sentenced to 6 months imprisonment on criminal defamation charges for insulting two journalists on his blogging website. I also urged the authorities to initiate reforms that would fully decriminalize defamation.

On 7 June I received a reply to the 23 May letter from Karl Erjavec, Minister of Foreign Affairs. He assured me that the relevant police directorate launched an investigation into the criminal activities against journalist Miran Šubic.

Additionally, Minister Erjavec told me about the details of the court decision to sentence blogger Kunstelj to 6 months in prison. He also wrote that the Ljubljana District Court found the judgment in the case against Kunstelj to be strict, yet appropriate. Kunstelj was sentenced for three different offences (two separate offences of insult / Article 158 of the Criminal Code / and for the offence of defamation / Article 159 of the Criminal Code).

Tajikistan

On **25 January** I wrote to Hamrokhon Zarifi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to bring to his attention developments relating to the website of RFE/RL's Tajik Service, Radio Ozodi. While I welcomed the fact that the Tajik version of the site has been back online since 21 January, unfortunately the Russian version remains blocked. I expressed hope other blocked websites would be restored.

I also asked for information relating to the case of Abduqayum Qayumov, a well-known journalist and parliamentary correspondent with Radio Ozodi, who on 9 December was denied accreditation by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

On **17 April** I presented to the authorities a legal review of Tajikistan's new law "On periodical print and other mass media," which went into effect in March. In the letter to Olim Salimzoda, the head of the parliamentary working group, I commended the group for its inclusive debate and for engaging civil society in the debate on the law. While noting a number of positive changes in the law that would strengthen the rights of journalists and improve access to official information, I emphasized the need for lawmakers and the executive to develop specific steps to make practical the new legal provisions.

(See Legal reviews)

Turkey

On **28 December** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu and issued a public statement to raise attention to developments that could further curb media freedom and

safety of journalists in Turkey.

On 16 December Rohat Emekçi, a news anchor and producer for Gün Radio in the Diyarbakir region, was attacked while leaving the station, sustaining a broken wrist and other injuries. She believes it happened because her name was on a blacklist of journalists published that day by the newspaper Yeni Akit. Yeni Akit called these journalists, most of whom are currently in prison, terrorists and criminals. Last summer Yeni Akit and its website, Habervaktim.com, launched a campaign against four prominent journalists in reaction to their writing on Kurdish issues.

In my letter I asked the authorities to publicly refute any attempts aimed at silencing journalists for their writing. I noted that protection of free speech by the authorities is equally essential when attempts to silence journalists come from within the media.

On **23 January** I wrote again to Minister Davutoğlu, expressing concern over the arrests of many journalists in the previous days. Eleven journalists were detained in police raids that took place in seven regions on 18 January on premises of alleged members of the outlawed Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front. The journalists were accused of supporting terrorism. Six of the journalists are believed to still be in detention, while five journalists, all from the magazine Yürüyüş, were freed after each was ordered to pay 10,000 liras and to report weekly to the police. My Office also received information that the journalists were beaten by the police while in custody and some were refused medical attention.

I repeatedly emphasized that the fight against terrorism is a universally acknowledged right and duty of any government. It is equally important to respect and protect the indispensable role of journalists in providing information to the public and I urged that all journalists accused of crimes should receive fair, transparent and prompt trials. I also repeated concerns about the large number of journalists in jail currently awaiting trial based on the Anti-Terror Law of Turkey, stressing that the latest detentions only show the urgent need for legislative reform.

I expressed hope that anticipated legal reforms would include the much-needed amendments to the Anti-Terror Law and that the new law would clearly distinguish between free expression and free media and any form of support for terrorism. I noted the statements made by high officials, including Minister of Justice Sadullah Ergin, about the reforms planned, stating that they would significantly change the definition of carrying out propaganda for, aiding or abetting terrorists and would distinguish freedom of expression and freedom of the media from terrorist propaganda.

On **5 February** I issued a public statement following my meeting with Justice Minister Ergin in Ankara commending the government for easing pre-trial detention procedures and stressing the need for further improvements. I noted that the high number of pending court cases involving journalists accused of a range of alleged crimes made it clear that laws needed to be changed. I welcomed Justice Minister Ergin's pledge that further reforms would be introduced and offered my Office's assistance in the continuing reforms.

Following our meeting the Ministry of Justice shared with my Office the draft 4th Judicial Reform Package, along with explanations regarding the planned changes and the related case law of the European Court of Human Rights.

On **12 February** I wrote to Justice Minister Ergin thanking him for statistical data regarding the number of detainees and convicts in Turkey. I was pleased that five journalists, who were among the 20 media members arrested on 20 December 2011, were released pending trial and I expressed hope that the upcoming hearings of journalists would take into consideration the indispensable role they play in informing the public.

On **24 May** I wrote to Minister Davutoğlu, presenting the updated table of imprisoned journalists in Turkey. I noted that currently there are 67 journalists behind bars in Turkey, most of them facing or convicted on terrorism charges. I repeated my support of the right and duty of any government to protect the society from terrorism and I acknowledged the efforts made by the authorities in the last years, including the adoption of the 3rd and 4th Judicial Reform Packages.

At the same time I emphasized that I do not see fundamental improvement in media freedom or safe working conditions for journalists in Turkey. The main findings of this year's research mirror the results from the last two years: Journalists with critical or differing views continue to face the threat of prison. In addition to those in jail, hundreds of other members of the media are awaiting trial outside of prison. I noted that while the convictions of several journalists were suspended as a result of the 3rd Judicial Reform Package and many journalists were released pending trial, 13 new journalists were imprisoned in the last 12 months, eight of them in 2013.

I expressed hope that fundamental reforms would take place very soon, ones that will get rid of the threat of prison for writing. I offered my Office's continued assistance in this matter.

On **1 June** I issued a public statement calling on the police to respect the rights of journalists when reporting at demonstrations. According to press reports, up to 20 journalists have been injured to date by police action.

I emphasized that the police should facilitate the work of journalists so that they can fulfill their duty to inform people on all issues of public interest. I also stressed that the authorities must require law enforcement agencies to respect the rights and duties of the media.

Access to the Internet reportedly was blocked by jamming devices in some areas during the protests. I stressed that the Internet must remain a free and open source of information and security concerns, however legitimate, should not be invoked to hinder the free flow of information.

Turkmenistan

On 4 January the first media law in the history of Turkmenistan came into effect. My Office and the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat have been involved in assistance with the drafting process. I hope there will be practical legal instruments to implement those provisions of the law that are positive for media developments in the country.

On **10 May** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Raşit Meredow regarding Rovshen Yazmuhamedov, a journalist with Azatlyk Radiosy, who was arrested on 6 May and held in a pre-detention facility.

Yazmuhamedov had been covering social issues which generated extensive discussions, including a report about a young woman who was barred from school because of her headscarf and another story about the sale of pork in halal shops. The journalist was released on 22 May. According to information available to me, no formal charges were brought against him.

Ukraine

On **6 December** at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Dublin I met with then Minister for Foreign Affairs Kostyantyn Gryshchenko. I expressed my deep appreciation that Ukraine chose to declare media freedom a priority during its 2013 OSCE Chairmanship. I offered my Office's full support for the upcoming year.

On 19 December I received a letter from Daria Chepak, Press Secretary of the President of Ukraine and Head of the Interagency Working Group on Freedom of Speech and Protection of Journalists, expressing appreciation for my Office's support for the work of the agency.

I look forward to continuing to work and exchange information with the group.

On **30 January** I issued a public statement welcoming convictions in the murder trial of journalist Georgyi Gongadze and called for additional investigations in the murder cases. I said that there is still a long way to go to break the vicious cycle of impunity for those who instigate violence against journalists.

On **13 March** I brought the case of Taras Chornoivan to the attention of the authorities. Chornoivan, chief editor of the news website Tarasova Pravda, was attacked and severely beaten on 5 March in the city of Vinnitsa.

On **26 April** in a letter to Foreign Minister Leonid Kozhara I expressed my hope that the independent station TVi, whose staff went on strike after an ownership dispute will, for the sake of media pluralism, be able to continue its important work.

On 24 May I received an answer of the authorities regarding Tvi. I was pleased to hear that the broadcasts continue on a regular basis. According to the letter, the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine, as well as the majority of the Ukrainian media experts, view the situation at Tvi as an internal, commercial conflict. I was also told that there have been no complaints or requests from Tvi management or journalists to the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council.

United Kingdom

On **19 December** I wrote to the authorities to express my concern about attacks on two journalists in Northern Ireland. On 14 December photographer Mark Pearce was the target of a pipe bomb attack on his house in County Down. On 17 December Adrian Rutherford, a Belfast Telegraph reporter, was attacked and robbed by a masked gang while covering loyalist protests in East Belfast. I am pleased that the authorities quickly condemned the attack on Pearce and the Rutherford incident is being investigated by a police ombudsman.

On **18 March** I issued a public statement expressing concern about an agreement to establish an agency, by Royal Charter, to regulate print media.

The new regulator could force newspapers to issue apologies and impose fines. I said that a government-established regulatory body, regardless of how independent it is intended to be, could pose a threat to media freedom and indicated that self-regulation is the best way to deal with failures in professional standards.

At the moment, print media in the UK has the right to join a voluntary self-regulatory body, the Press Complaints Commission, which has come under criticism in the wake of the hacking scandal by some British media.

I said that the United Kingdom has a 300-year history of voluntary self-regulation which is regarded around the world as a best practice and it should not be overturned because of recent criminal acts regarding the phone-hacking scandal. The people responsible are being prosecuted. These actions should not be used as an excuse to rein in all print media.

On **25 April** I issued a public statement welcoming the adoption of a defamation law by Parliament that will make it more difficult for unwarranted lawsuits to be pursued against media.

The law requires that claimants must show they have or will suffer serious harm before filing defamation lawsuits and introduced new statutory defences of truth and honest opinion to replace common law and introduces a defence of "responsible publication on matters of public interest." It removes the presumption in favour of jury trials in defamation cases.

The law also restricts forum shopping in filing lawsuits; the so-called "libel tourism" trade, where foreign claimants file suits in plaintiff-friendly British courts. Foreign-based journalists will no longer be subject to British defamation suits and non-European Union residents must prove a British court is the proper jurisdiction for their claims to be heard.

United States

On **14 May** I wrote to Secretary of State John Kerry and issued a public statement expressing my distress with the Justice Department's action in 2012 to secretly seize two months of phone records of up to 20 lines assigned to The Associated Press. I said there may be occasions when, in the interest of security, limited intrusion on reporters' activities, judicially authorized, may be justified, but I assess the sheer scope and breadth of this action as a deprivation of basic constitutional rights.

I said the action also calls into question the ability of sources to talk to reporters without fear of government eavesdropping. There is simply no justification for such a broad violation of the reporters' rights.

On **28 May** I wrote to the chair and co-chair of the U.S. Helsinki Commission and issued a public statement calling on Congress to pass a federal shield law to protect journalists and their sources. Current developments, including the disclosures in the Associated Press and James Rosen (Fox) affairs, show the law is needed now more than ever.

I said that such surveillance would have a profoundly chilling effect on the right of journalists to pursue important stories of public interest.

A well-crafted shield law would eliminate the threat of journalists going to prison for declining to identify their sources and would stem the tendency of law enforcement officials of engaging in overly broad monitoring of journalists' activities.

Uzbekistan

On **3 May** I wrote to President Islam Karimov, bringing to his attention the cases of three imprisoned journalists. Dilmurod Saiid, who suffers from tuberculosis, is serving a 12-and-a-half-year term in the Navoi prison on charges of extortion. His recent amnesty appeal was denied. Solijon Abdurakhmanov, 62, is serving a 10-year jail sentence despite his age and poor health. His amnesty appeal was also refused. Hairullo Khamidov, a popular radio host, was convicted and sentenced to six years in prison for associating with a radical Islamist group, charges which he denies. I appealed to the President to pardon the journalists.

Projects and activities since the last report

Legal reviews

Bosnia and Herzegovina

On **4 June** I presented to the authorities a legal review of the draft amendments to the Law on Freedom of Access to Information of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The analysis was commissioned by my Office and prepared by Helen Darbshire, executive director of Access Info Europe and a well-known international expert on access to information who was also a member of the drafting committee of the first Bosnia and Herzegovina Law on Freedom of Access to Information.

The purpose of the analysis was to offer support and expertise in order to ensure that the proposed legislation is in line with OSCE commitments and international standards on the right to access to information as well as for the further development of media freedom in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Here are some of the main concerns expressed in the analysis:

- A number of proposed provisions are out of line with international standards and/or would be unworkable in practice.
- The proposed Article 8.2, which is of particular concern, should not be adopted as it runs counter to international standards in multiple ways.
- The attempts to define in the law a list of classes of information which should and should not be published is worrisome because it risks limiting access to large volumes of information of great public importance.
- The text should be made much more specific and should justify clearly why particular changes are being made and how precisely they bring the legal framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina in line with international standards.

The most pressing matter in the context of the debate on the current reforms is to ensure that in separating out the Law on Freedom of Access to Information and the Law on Personal Data Protection, no provisions should be introduced which would seriously curtail the right of access to information.

The full text of the legal review is available at <http://www.osce.org/fom/102256>

Georgia

On **25 March** I presented to the authorities a legal review of a package of amendments to the “Law of Georgia on Broadcasting” prepared by Professor Katrin Nyman Metcalf, a well-known international expert in communications law.

The analysis indicates that the proposed amendments are generally improvements to the current law and give better guarantees for plurality and transparency.

However, the amendments lack any transitional provisions which are recognized as the main deficiency of the proposed amendments.

- The draft amendments include significant changes to the Board of Trustees and the manner in which it is appointed. The Board of Trustees has been reduced from 15 to nine, which would be more efficient. Previously all candidates were selected in open competition. Under the new proposals, three will be selected in open competition, three by the Parliamentary minority and three by the rest of the Parliament – in practice that should mean mainly the majority. Such explicit inclusion of the opposition is important in a situation in which the ruling party has a large majority, which otherwise would mean that they could dominate the appointment process.
- Another improvement of the draft amendments is that the competition is to be managed by the Public Defender instead of the President. It is better that such a process be organized by a non-political body, as a guarantee for its independence. This proposed appointment process is more in line with practice in Europe and other parts of the world. Also, the criteria for the Trustees have been made more specific. The dismissal procedure is amended to mirror the changed appointment procedure.
- The tasks and duties of the Board of Trustees and the management are clearer. Concerning the Director General, the criteria and a procedure for the appointment of the Director General are set out, the length of the mandate is reduced and better oversight provisions are included.
- A large part of the proposed amendments deal with the transformation of the previous state broadcaster of the autonomous Republic of Adjara into an autonomous part of Georgian Public Broadcaster with a special status. These provisions are in line with best international practice.

- Another key element of the amendments is the introduction of must-carry obligation, based on agreement by the parties but with an obligation to agree. The obligation is in line with international standards but the provisions lack clarity, for example, about the role of the regulatory authority. The references to honest negotiations may be hard to apply in practice.
- Another important improvement is the possibility of the broadcasters to appeal sanctions to a court. The right to appeal is very important and a core element of the rule of law. However, the main deficiency of the proposed amendments is the absence of transitional provisions governing the introduction of the new Board of Trustees. The amendments are not clear on the fact that not the entire Board of Trustees of the Public Broadcaster shall be replaced at the same time and, as mentioned, because of the lack of transitional provisions, how and when the new Board will replace the old one.

What is needed and what is lacking is a transitional system with provisions setting out how the change from one system to another will be made. As the number of trustees is reduced, there needs to be a system for undertaking this that still preserves the possibility for the Board of working efficiently. New requirements that may not be met by existing Trustees should normally only apply to new appointees with the existing ones serving out their term or the major part of their term. A gradual phasing out of the existing Board will be necessary as the new one is to be smaller.

The full text of the legal review is available at <http://www.osce.org/fom/100314>

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

On **30 May** I presented to the authorities a legal review of the draft law “On Media and Audiovisual Media Services.”

The analysis, commissioned by my Office, was prepared by Professor Katrin Nyman-Metcalf, a well-known international expert in communications law, who has previously analysed several laws across the OSCE region.

The analysis shows there are some positive elements in the draft law in that it utilizes terminology and introduces provisions that harmonize some European Union rules, such as the Audiovisual Media Services Directive 2010/13/EU (AVMSD).

However, there are some concerns identified in the analysis:

- The main objections to the draft law concern printed and electronic publications and the unnecessary requirements made on them for registration; also the definition of electronic publications is too complex, and therefore risks restricting freedom on the Internet.

- The draft law blurs the distinction between self-regulation and formal regulation, thus limiting self-regulation's character.
- The draft law is very long and complex, therefore causing a risk that it will create additional restrictions for some types of media that are not necessary in a democratic society with free media.
- It is also not clear why journalists and editors-in-chief need to be defined in the draft law, as it limits the scope of who can be considered a journalist.
- The appointment process in the regulatory agency within the scope of the draft law must have more involvement of civil society.
- The reference to freedom of expression is good, but the possible limitations of it are potentially too wide and there should be the safeguard that restrictions must be necessary in a democratic society and,
- Any sanctions must be applied in a gradual and escalating manner.

The full text of the legal review is available at <http://www.osce.org/fom/102135>

Tajikistan

On **17 April** I presented a legal review of Tajikistan's new law "On periodical print and other mass media" to the parliamentary working group that initiated the legislation. The new media law went into effect in March. The review was commissioned by my Office and provided by Elena Sherstoboeva, an expert at the faculty for media communication of the National Research University Higher School for Economics in Moscow. My Office, as well as the OSCE Office in Tajikistan, facilitated discussions among the parliamentary working group, media and NGOs.

I commended the parliamentary working group for engaging civil society in the debate and noted a number of positive changes in the law that would strengthen the rights of journalists, improve access to official information and rule out media monopolies.

I also emphasized the need for lawmakers and the executive branch to develop specific steps to put the new legal provisions into practice and highlighted the need for greater independence of editorial offices.

The following main recommendations among others were made by the expert:

- The standard of the state support of the media (Article 5 of the law) needs the establishment of a mechanism to ensure equal conditions for state support media, including transparent, open and pluralistic principles and guarantees to avoid that it becomes a tool to favor media loyal to the government.
- To provide the opportunity for online resources to function as media on a voluntary basis, so editors and journalists of new media can equally enjoy traditional privileges and fulfill the same responsibilities as traditional media.

- To replace the bureaucratic double registration procedure (Articles 10-12 of the Act) by a transparent, open and pluralistic notifying procedure applicable only to the print media and carried out by an independent body and to minimize the requirements for the creation of the media.
- It is important to release the broadcast media from registration procedures as it is already subject to licensing requirements.
- To form a clear and operational mechanism to appeal denials of registration of new media.
- To provide a mechanism to ensure the implementation of the principle of professional independence of media outlets. A number of new provisions of the Act create a tool for excessive control over its activities, not only by the founder, but also by the public authorities. It is important to narrow the powers and duties of the founder to avoid the possibility of interference in editorial policy and to reintroduce the possibility of the chief editor to choose the editorial team and to strengthen the role of the charter as guarantor of its professional independence.

The full text of the legal review is available at: <http://www.osce.org/ru/fom/100831>

Access to information principles promulgated

On **June 12** I took note of the promulgation of new principles designed to ensure public access to government information without jeopardizing legitimate efforts to protect people from national security threats.

The Tshwane Principles on National Security and the Right to Information were developed by governments, civil society groups, former security officials and academics and facilitated by the Open Society Justice Initiative.

In addition to addressing what government-held information may legitimately be kept secret and what information should be disclosed, they outline standards for the treatment of whistleblowers who act in the public interest, as well as issues related to classification and declassification, and other questions.

Highlights of the Tshwane Principles include:

- Information should be kept secret only if its disclosure poses “a real and identifiable risk of significant harm to a legitimate national security interest.”
- Information concerning serious violations of international human rights or humanitarian law must always be disclosed.
- The public should have access to information on surveillance programs.
- No government entity should be categorically exempt from disclosure requirements.

- Public officials who act in the public interest to expose government abuses should be protected from retaliation.

The Principles are available at
<http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/Global%20Principles%20on%20National%20Security%20and%20the%20Right%20to%20Information%20%28Tshwane%20Principles%29%20-%20June%202013.pdf>

Visits and participation in events

On **29-30 November** the Director of the Office spoke about media reform and the role of the state in different regions of the world at a conference in **Ljubljana** organized by the Peace Institute.

On **5-6 December** I attended the **Dublin** Ministerial Council.

On **6 December**, as a member of the jury, my Office took part in a ceremony organized by the Austrian chapter of Reporters without Borders in **Vienna**, where it was announced that Italian journalists Emanuela Zuccalá and Alessia Cerantola were winners of the 2012 Press Freedom Award.

On **7 December** my Office took part in an expert meeting on freedom of expression and copyright in **London** organized by Article 19.

On **10 December** I gave a keynote address and took part in a panel discussion with Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves on Internet freedom at a conference organized by the Estonian Institute for Human Rights in **Tallinn**.

On **11-12 December** the Director of the Office took part in the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) World Congress in **Geneva** dealing with the topic of “The Call for Stronger International Mechanisms to Remedy Human Rights Violations.”

On **12-13 December** my Office organized a three-day master class in online media regulation for approximately 20 participants in **Istanbul**.

On **20 December** the Director of the Office gave an opening address at a conference in **Bishkek** on reform of the government press service hosted by the OSCE Centre in Bishkek.

On **21 December** the Director of the Office gave the opening address at the 18th roundtable marking Russia’s media law at Lomonosov Moscow State University Faculty of Journalism in **Moscow**.

On **16 January** my Office took part in a conference in **Tirana** on media freedom and freedom of expression in the context of the integration of Albania into the European Union organized by the European Union.

On **21 January** the Principal Adviser of the Office attended a conference in **Brussels** on the “Decline of Europe or Crisis of European Values” and discussed the findings of a report on the issues of multiculturalism and tolerance in Germany prepared by the organization Public Union for Human Rights.

On **5 February** I spoke in **Ankara** at a high-level conference on freedom of expression and the media in Turkey addressing ways to better protect media freedom.

On **7 February** the Principal Adviser of the Office participated in **Brussels** at a conference on “Media freedom and independence: Trends and challenges in Europe” regarding media policy-making processes in EU member states and candidate countries with the goal of identifying which policy processes, tools and instruments can best support the development of free and independent media. The conference was organized by the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy, the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities and the Association of European Journalists.

On **13-15 February** my Office organized the conference, “Internet 2013 – Shaping policies to advance media freedom” at the Hofburg in **Vienna**. A full program of events and related materials is available at <http://www.osce.org/event/internet2013>

(See Internet related activities)

On **25-27 February** my Office participated at the conference “Towards knowledge societies for peace and sustainable development,” in **Paris** as part of the World Summit on the Information Society +10 Review to assess the progress made on the WSIS and discuss ICT trends that will affect all sections of society. The meeting was organized by the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

On **27-28 February** I participated in the 5th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations in **Vienna** and served as a panelist in the session “Back to basics: Freedom the media matters,” organized by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.

On **1 March** my Office participated in a discussion on media in minority languages in **Novi Sad** on problems faced by minority-language media in Serbia. The meeting was organized by the OSCE Mission to Serbia and the Vojvodina Provincial Secretariat for Culture and Public Information.

On **19 March** I attended a seminar in **Stockholm** on “Advancing freedom of expression in Turkey” and participated in a panel discussion entitled “The way ahead: Policy prescriptions,” organized by the Institute for Security and Development Policy and Freedom House.

On **March 25-27** I attended the conference on “The Western Balkans and EU enlargement: Ensuring progress on the rule of law” in **London** and chaired a discussion on growing independent media. The conference was organized by Wilton Park.

On **16-18 April** the Director of the Office participated and spoke at the 2013 Milton Wolf Seminar on media and diplomacy, “Diplomatic Maneuvers and journalistic coverage in a time of reset, pivot and rebalance” in **Vienna**, organized by the Center for Global Communication Studies at the Annenberg School for Communications, the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna and the American Austrian Foundation.

On **April 17** my Office participated in consultations in **Ljubljana** for “Building capacities and coalitions for monitoring media integrity and advancing media reforms” for the meeting organizer, the South East European Media Observatory.

On **17-19 April** my Office organized a master class in online media regulation in **Istanbul** for 20 government regulators and legislators from the South Caucasus.

On **23-24 April** I participated as a panelist in **Warsaw** at the conference, “Safety of journalists – current challenges,” organized by the Foreign Ministry of Poland and the embassies of Austria and the Swiss Confederation to Poland.

On **2-4 May** I marked the 20th anniversary of World Press Freedom day in **San Jose, Costa Rica**, including participating in the event, organized by UNESCO and the government of Costa Rica, “Safe to speak: Securing freedom of expression in all media.”

Also, along with rapporteurs for free speech from the United Nations, the Organization of American States and the African Commission on Human and People’s rights, we launched the 2013 Joint Declaration on the protection of freedom of expression and diversity in the digital terrestrial transition.

The Joint Declaration is available at <https://www.osce.org/fom/101257>

On **13-15 May** my Office, in co-operation with the Ukrainian Chairmanship and ODIHR, organized the OSCE Human Dimension Seminar on the Media Freedom Legal Framework in **Warsaw**. During the three-day event, representatives from governments, international organizations, academia, media NGOs and human rights organizations from the OSCE region exchanged views on key aspects of the rule of law framework for media freedom. They shared best practices and identified challenges and discussed strategies for better implementation of OSCE commitments on a national level. A full program of events and related materials is available at http://www.osce.org/event/hds_2013

On **22-23 May** I participated in a panel discussion at the **Stockholm** Internet Forum with this year’s emphasis on how openness on the Internet can promote economic and social development. The annual conference was organized by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Internet Infrastructure Foundation and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

On **28 May-1 June** my Office took part in a Rapporteur Mission to **Mongolia**. In meetings with government, parliament and civil society media freedom issues were discussed in great openness and with great interest in my Office’s involvement by the Mongolians. Support in the development and evaluation of a comprehensive legal framework on media and information freedom was identified as a main priority by Mongolian counterparts. They also expressed interest in my Office’s initiatives and best practice exchange such as safety of media professionals, media self-regulation, the digital switchover and Internet issues.

My Office is looking forward to involve Mongolia in regional and OSCE-wide events.

On **3-5 June** I made an official visit to Minsk at the invitation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I met with Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei, First Deputy Head of Presidential Administration Alexander Radkov, Minister of Information Oleg Proleskovsky, Chair of

Supreme Court Valentin Sukalo, Aide on Foreign Policy to the President Valery Brylev, Head of the Operational and Analytic Center under the Aegis of the President of the Republic of Belarus Sergey Shpegun, Head of Standing Committee on Human Rights, National Relations and Mass Media Andrey Naumovich, Head of Standing Committee on International Relations of the National Assembly Nikolai Samoseiko and other officials.

I also met representatives from the Belarusian Association of Journalists and the Belarusian Union of Journalists, as well as well journalists and civil society representatives, including Marina Koktysh, deputy editor-in-chief of Narodnaya Volya, Irina Khalip, correspondent for Novaya Gazeta and Valery Bulgakov, editor-in-chief of the magazine Arche. I also met the editor-in-chief of Sovetskaya Belarus, Pavel Yakubovich, and Gennady Davydko, chairperson of National TV and Radio Company.

I opened a training seminar on Internet media training entitled Freedom, Professionalism, Sustainability for state and independent journalists, organized in co-operation with the Foreign Ministry.

On **6-7 June** I gave a keynote speech at the 25th Medienforum in **Cologne** where the topic for the event was “Changing Media, Changing Society.”

On **6-7 June** the Director of my Office attended the 27th meeting of the advisory committee of the European Audiovisual Observatory in **Strasbourg** and a meeting of the editorial board of IRIS, a publication of the EAO.

On **12 June** I attended the fireside chats at the Wiener Osteuropaforum in **Vienna** and took part in a discussion, “The Yugosphere - An emerging transnational identity in Southeast Europe?”

Publications

During the current reporting period my Office published:

Freedom of Expression, Free Flow of Information and Freedom of Media, CSCE/OSCE Main Provisions 1975-2012, 2nd edition, in English and Russian. They are available at <http://www.osce.org/fom/99560>

Joint Declarations of the representatives of intergovernmental bodies to protect free media and expression: 1999-2012 in English and Russian. They are available at <http://www.osce.org/fom/99558>

The book of the 14th Central Asia Media Conference: From traditional to online media: Best practices and perspectives, in English and Russian. They are available at <http://www.osce.org/fom/102312>

The book of the 9th South Caucasus Media Conference: From traditional to online media: Best practices and perspectives, in English and Russian. They are available at www.osce.org/fom/102311

The Online Media Self-Regulation Handbook, in English and Russian. They are available at <http://www.osce.org/fom/99560>

2013 Social Media Guidebook 2013, in English and Russian. They are available at <http://www.osce.org/fom/99563>

Internet-related activities

Internet 2013: Shaping policies to advance media freedom

On **14-15 February** my Office, with assistance and extra budgetary financial support of participating States, organized the conference Internet 2013: Shaping policies to advance media freedom.

The purpose of the conference was to provide a platform where the main stakeholders in Internet media freedom could engage in advanced policy discussions with the aim of enhancing global Internet freedom policies and promoting good practices of online media governance. The recommendations emanating from the discussions were compiled and published by my Office. They are available in English and Russian at <https://www.osce.org/fom/100112>

The conference was attended by official representatives of the participating States, relevant agencies of the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Union, as well as media freedom NGOs, civil society, academia and journalists. Also participating was the Secretariat and all three institutions and various field presences.

In all, approximately 400 participants representing different stakeholders took part in **Vienna** and more than 600 people followed the conference live by live streaming. Lively discussions on online social media platforms were held in parallel to the panel sessions and the web services of the Office and the OSCE were accessed by thousands of unique visitors. In addition to the impact in the digital media, the event received coverage in 58 news reports throughout the OSCE region.

Training

On **11-13 December** my Office organized a three-day master class in online media regulation in **Istanbul**. Approximately 30 representatives of regulatory authorities, government ministries, legislators and lawyers and civil society representatives from Central Asia, Azerbaijan and Turkey took part in the event to discuss key issues related to Internet regulation, including legal challenges and issues pertaining to content regulation, the role of the government, regulation of online comments and self-regulatory mechanisms.

On **17-19 April** my Office organized a master class in online media regulation in **Istanbul**. Approximately 20 participants representing regulatory authorities, government ministries, legislators and civil society from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan discussed subjects such as Internet regulation, the role of the government, regulation of online comments and self-regulatory mechanisms.

On **3 June** with the assistance of the Foreign Ministry of Belarus, my Office organized and I spoke at a training seminar on “Internet Media: Freedom, Professionalism, Sustainability” for

independent and state journalists in **Minsk**, which covered Internet media as a tool to increase media outreach.

Planned activities for the next reporting period

Speaking engagements and visits

On **17-18 June** I will attend in third Freedom Online in **Tunis** and participate as a panelist in the workshop “Cyber Security and Human Rights.”

On **20 June** I will give a keynote speech at the Speak Up 2 conference on freedom of expression and the media in the Western Balkans and Turkey in **Brussels**.

On **2-5 September** I will give the keynote speech at the 2nd Academy on Media Law in South East Europe in **Sarajevo**.

Conferences

Central Asia Media Conference

This year’s conference is on “Fifteen years of the CAMC: Reflecting on OSCE media-freedom commitments.” It will be held on **27-28 June** in **Bishkek** as a special event celebrating the anniversary of the conference, the first of which also took place in Bishkek in 1999. More than 100 representatives of the authorities, media, academia and international experts will attend and examine the changes in the media landscape that have taken place in the region since then. I appreciate the assistance of the authorities of Kyrgyzstan and staff of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek in preparing for the conference. Representatives from Afghanistan and Mongolia also are expected to take part.

South Caucasus Media Conference

The South Caucasus Media Conference will take place in autumn and will be the 10th of its kind in the region. Its participants will discuss media developments in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

South East Europe Media Conference

The 3rd South East Europe Media Conference will be **18-20 September** in **Tirana** where participants will discuss media developments in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia.

Training

South East Europe Digitalization master class

On **19 September** my Office will organize a master class on the topic of the digital switchover in South East Europe to be held in **Tirana** for representatives of regulatory authorities, government ministries, legislators and civil society from the region.

2013 Extra-budgetary donors

I would like to thank the governments of Austria, Azerbaijan, the Czech Republic, France, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States for generously supporting our media conferences and training events.

I also would like to thank Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom and the United States for contributing to the conference, “Internet 2013: Shaping policies to advance media freedom.”

I encourage all participating States to consider supporting my Office’s efforts to provide classes and regional meetings to improve the media landscape.