



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

**13th Central Asia Media Conference
Pluralism and Internet Governance**

**Dushanbe, Tajikistan
29-30 November 2011**

DECLARATION

The 13th Central Asia Media Conference was organized by the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media with the assistance of the OSCE field offices in Central Asia, and was held on 29-30 November 2011 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Throughout the years the Central Asia Media Conference has become a unique forum to discuss media issues and co-operation among journalists of states in Central Asia.

The two-day conference hosted more than a hundred and fifty government officials, parliamentarians, journalists, media experts and civil society representatives from Central Asia.

The focus of the conference was media pluralism and Internet governance. Participants discussed the role of the Internet in promoting pluralism in the OSCE region and Central Asia in particular, analyzed international standards and national practices in this field, exchanged experiences, as well as shared the latest developments in the field of media freedom in Central Asia.

The Conference:

1. Welcomes the fact that representatives of the media, civil society and government representatives from Central Asia took part in the conference, acknowledging the importance of regional as well as multi-stakeholder co-operation in the field of media.
2. Acknowledges that the use of the Internet by media organizations and individuals, including citizen journalists, blogging activities, or the use of social media enjoy the protection of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as the right to freedom of expression.
3. Stresses the importance of Internet literacy to strengthen independent decision-making regarding content by the users, instead of governments' involvement in Internet blocking and filtering.

4. Calls on governments to put in place all necessary legislative and technological parameters to facilitate the freer and wider dissemination of information, including through modern information and communication technologies.
5. Urges governments to support technical development to guarantee access to the Internet for every citizen unhindered by state interventions.
6. Urges the governments to ensure that the Internet remains an open and public forum for freedom of expression and opinion in the countries of Central Asia, as guaranteed by OSCE commitments and enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights.
7. Highlights that access to the Internet and access to online information should be recognized by national legislation in conformity with international standards and regarded as inherent to the right to free information and expression.
8. Emphasizes that the Internet offers unique opportunities to foster the free flow of information, also across borders, which is a basic OSCE commitment.
9. Urges governments to avoid general blocking of the Internet as a means of interference.
10. Stresses that the right to freedom of expression applies not only to traditional means of communication, but also including new media on the Internet. Any limitations or restrictions to this right can only be justified if, for a legitimate aim and in the public interest, necessary in a democratic society, prescribed by law and proportionate.
11. Calls on the governments to use good offices and due legal practice in media regulation, to avoid vague legal provisions, and to ensure that implementation of laws and practices are transparent and open to appeal.
12. Urges governments to foster pluralism and refrain from harassment and monopolization of media.
13. Emphasizes that media pluralism is a key value and one of the most important conditions for the existence of a democratic society in which Internet plays a crucial role.
14. Calls on the governments to support the development of affordable and high-quality Internet connection and to create favorable conditions for healthy competition among Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in order to provide all citizens, including those living in rural and remote areas, with access to the Internet.
15. Stresses that ISPs should not be subjected to governmental procedures, except for those that are applicable to any other businesses. Furthermore, ISPs should not be liable for content generated by others, which is disseminated by their service as long as they are not responsible for that content (*'mere conduit'*) or refuse to obey a court order to remove illegal content.

16. Calls on governments to limit the duration and scope of traffic data storage and minimise the cost burden on ISPs if obliged to store such data - which should only be for narrowly tailored, justifiable purposes.
17. Emphasizes that network neutrality should be respected, so online information and traffic are treated equally regardless of the device, content, author, origin or destination of information.
18. Calls on the governments to ensure that Internet service providers respect the principle of network neutrality and make transparent their data traffic management policies. Non-discriminatory access to networks and services should be guaranteed.
19. Urges the governments to consult with and involve civil society in Internet governance policy development, legislation drafting and digital switchover process. Governments should use digital switchover to foster pluralism in broadcast media.

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