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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

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STATEMENT

ENGLISH only

**in Response to the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Harlem Désir
delivered by Mr. Vahe Gevorgyan, Deputy Permanent Representative, at the 1191st
Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**

July 5, 2018

Mr. Chair,

We would like to warmly welcome Mr. Harlem Désir, the OSCE Representative on the Freedom of the Media back to the Permanent Council and thank him for his report.

Armenia has always valued the activities of this OSCE institution aimed at assisting participating states in ensuring freedom of expression in the entire OSCE area. In our view, the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media is among those OSCE executive structures who is able to achieve tangible change on the ground.

We recognize the role of this mandate in promoting freedom of expression and media in Armenia. The recent democratic change in Armenia was considerably shaped by the existence of free media in Armenia. We have already had opportunity to present to the Permanent Council protection of the freedom of expression during the recent events in Armenia, which resulted in the forming of a new Government. We welcome the close attention paid by the RFOM Office in assessing all instances of violence and obstruction of work of journalists which occurred throughout mass public protests and which is also reflected in your recent report.

From the outset, it should be stressed that in the light of unprecedented long and large scale public protests few cases of violence were registered. At the same time, we would like to stress that all cases have been thoroughly addressed by the law enforcement agencies and certain journalists and media workers were recognized as victims and criminal investigations are ongoing.

The Government of Armenia stands ready to closely cooperate with the Office of OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to further strengthen pluralistic and free media in Armenia.

We understand that free media is the main focus of this OSCE mandate. We also consider that protection of public figures who make their views through media as an essential prerequisite not only of freedom of expression but that of media, since without free voices media cannot act freely. In this regard, we would like to see stronger involvement of this mandate in protecting those public figures who are persecuted for their views expressed through media

The freedom of expression is essential in dismantling hate narratives and propaganda of war and raising awareness on violent actions, which may lead into serious security threats. Any attempt to deny access of journalists and other media workers to the conflict areas could be recognized as early warning sign in this regard.

In conclusion, let me reiterate our strong support to this mandate and readiness to closely cooperate in implementing all OSCE commitments related to the freedom of expression and media freedom.

Thank you.