



18–19 November 2020 | Online

#SCMC2020

DRAFT ANNOTATED AGENDA

SESSION 1: Wednesday, 18 November 2020

13:45 – 14:00 Participants connect via ZOOM (access link to be provided)
(Vienna time)

14:00 – 14:15 **OPENING REMARKS**

Jürgen Heissel, Director, Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

Inid Milo, Head of OSCE Chairmanship Task Force, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania

Moderator: Ton van den Brandt, Senior Adviser, Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

14:15 – 15:45 **Promoting freedom of information in the times of health crisis**

International and national laws in the South Caucasus countries provide for a human right to freedom of expression, which includes freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media of one's choice. Its exercise, though, may be subject to certain restrictions, in particular, for the protection of public health. Such restrictions should however pass the test of necessity, proportionality and fairness.

A balance of public health and freedom of information is an under-discussed topic, especially in the context of

emergencies and quarantines caused by pandemics. The specificity of the current crisis is in both its broad geographical scale and concerted governmental response to it, as well as in the particular technological perspective of the introduced restrictions on human rights. Since the start of the pandemic, a number of States introduced limitations on freedom of information and derogated from their relevant commitments under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. These regulatory restrictions target the use of all media, but particularly – digital, and typically include harsh penalties for dissemination of rumours about such aspects as the scale, origin, cure, or other circumstances of the disease, and restrictions to disseminate any information related to COVID-19 stemming from non-official sources. All major intergovernmental institutions, including the UN, Council of Europe, and the OSCE, reacted to the actions of governments that sought to limit human rights.

This session will discuss whether some of the new mechanisms introduced can serve as a test for how far governments can go in controlling the flow of information during and after an emergency situation. In particular, whether the tools used to protect public health could be found helpful in the ongoing drive in the OSCE region to find ways to counteract the general “false news” phenomenon.

Speakers:

Andrey Rikhter, Senior Adviser, Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

Antonina Cherevko, Chairperson, Independent Media Council in Ukraine

Artur Papyan, Director, Media Diversity Institute, Armenia

Mehman Aliyev, Director, Turan News Agency, Azerbaijan

Mariam Nikuradze, Executive Director, Open Caucasus Media portal, Georgia

Discussion

15:45 – 16:00 CLOSING REMARKS

SESSION 2: Thursday, 19 November 2020

12:45 – 13:00 Participants connect via ZOOM (access link to be provided)

(Vienna time)

Moderator: Aidar Botagarov, Adviser, Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

13:00 – 15:00 Overview of freedom of expression and media freedom developments in the region

This session will discuss media freedom developments over the past year, including legislative initiatives and implementation practices, safety of journalists, plurality and diversity of national and local media, and other key issues and challenges pertinent to freedom of expression and media freedom offline and online. Together with the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, journalists, civil society and government representatives will address a broad range of policy, regulatory and practical aspects, and mechanisms necessary for the protection and promotion of media freedom, pluralism and independence, as well as media development.

Speakers:

Georgia

- **Lasha Darsalia**, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs
- **Nino Danelia**, Co-founder and a member of “Coalition for Media Advocacy”

Azerbaijan

- **Leyla Abdullayeva**, Head of Press–Service Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- **Arif Aliyev**, Chairman, Yeni Nesil journalist organization

Armenia

- **Aram Ananyan**, Director, Armenpress news agency
- **Boris Navasardian**, President, Yerevan Press Club

Discussion

15:00 – 15:15 CLOSING REMARKS

Jürgen Heissel, Director, Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media