



## **Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**

### **on Media Freedom as a Central Pillar of Comprehensive Security**

**13-14 March 2023  
Hofburg, Vienna**

#### **ANNOTATED AGENDA**

OSCE participating States agree that human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and democratic institutions are the foundations of peace and security. They reaffirmed (Lisbon Summit, 1996) that the “OSCE’s comprehensive approach to security requires improvement in the implementation of all commitments in the human dimension, in particular with respect to human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

As enablers for the enjoyment of all other human rights, freedom of expression and media freedom are key pillars of any functioning, secure democracy. There are numerous OSCE commitments that are aimed at ensuring freedom of expression, freedom of information and freedom of the media, including access to media and information. Participating States also recognized “the essential role that the free and independent media can play in democratic societies and the strong influence it can have in countering or exacerbating misperceptions, prejudices” (MC.DEC/13/06). They recognize that independent media and freedom of expression are cornerstones for stable and peaceful societies (Helsinki 1975, Copenhagen 1990, MC.DEC/18/03, among others). In an already challenging environment for media freedom across the OSCE region, especially in times of conflict and crises, the Russian Federation’s ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine is further underlining the important role of independent journalism.

This Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting (SHDM) will provide a forum for the discussion of the nexus between free media and comprehensive security in the OSCE region, in particular against the backdrop of the current security challenges. More specifically, it is aimed at identifying examples of how free media has helped to promote security, including by fostering meaningful public debates on political and security-related issues within democratic societies. It will also explore how technological advancements have directly impacted freedom of expression, media freedom, and access to information; with artificial intelligence playing an increasing role in shaping and arbitrating online information spaces, with a direct impact on human rights, democracy, and security.

The Meeting is based on the recognition that the interest of security and the fundamental human right of freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, are often falsely pitted against each other, as if one comes at the expense of the other. In practical terms, however, these two are mutually reinforcing. Moreover, an enabling environment for the participation of women journalists but also young journalists in the public sphere is not only essential for ensuring media pluralism but also for the broader scope of building inclusive and robust democratic societies.

This meeting is intended to evaluate the existing interrelationship between the media, democracy, and security across the OSCE region, especially in a time of conflict and crises, and to share best practices on how this relationship may be enhanced.

This SHDM will focus on the following key themes: Emerging challenges to media freedom; journalism in times of conflict; rebuilding trust in the media; developing a public interest framework for media freedom; journalism's contribution to the three dimensions of the OSCE's comprehensive security framework, including from a youth perspective; the interlinkage between democracy and media freedom; and the safety of journalists.

## **Day 1**

13.00 – 14.00            **OPENING SESSION**

*Opening remarks*  
*Introductory addresses*  
*Technical information*

14.00 – 16.00            **SESSION I: Why there can be no comprehensive security without media freedom**

Media freedom contributes to security by promoting just, peaceful and inclusive societies, including by ensuring public access to information and protection of fundamental freedoms. However, its ability to do so is obstructed by several factors. Trust in the media is falling globally and has reached a new low. Disinformation and propaganda are dangerous tools that skew and tarnish our information spaces and that create an upside-down trust paradigm – deepening belief in lies, while sowing distrust in accurate, quality public interest media content. Moreover, political will to protect the media is being traded in for hostility against the media; tearing down its crucial role in democracy, peace, and security. This challenging environment poses serious obstacles for the media to fulfil their key function for our common comprehensive security. This session aims to promote a better understanding of the crucial role that independent media have for comprehensive security, while discussing trends and emerging challenges that prevent the media from performing their important work.

### **Themes to guide the discussions for this session:**

- *How can a public interest framework strengthen the role of free media?*
- *What is the role of the media in times of conflict?*
- *How and why do we need to rebuild trust in the media?*
- *How has the media landscape changed over the years, and how do such changes (including digital disruptions) impact media freedom?*

[16.30 – 17.30 – side events]

## **Day 2**

[9.00 – 10.00 – side events]

### 10.30 – 12.30      **SESSION II: How media freedom impacts all three OSCE dimensions**

Journalists play an important role in democratic society as a conduit of news, information, and opinion. The media enables the public's right to be informed and offers a space for public debate, so that people can intelligently participate in public and political life and take informed decisions. In this way, the role of the media is valuable beyond measure. This session will bring together experts and journalists working on specific thematic areas across the OSCE's three dimensions, to showcase the real impact of journalism toward sustainable, just, and peaceful societies.

#### **Themes to guide the discussions for this session:**

- *How can journalism facilitate efforts to address the climate change crisis?*
- *What is the role of the media in countering violent extremism and terrorism?*
- *What role does the media play in the process of democratic elections?*
- *How can the media support transformative changes to remove structural and systemic barriers and create an enabling environment in which women (and others who suffer discrimination on account of sex or gender) can exercise their rights and participate fully and equally in the private, public and political sphere?*

[13.15 – 14.15 – side events]

### 14.30 – 16.30      **SESSION III: Media pluralism as a cornerstone of democracy**

The global backsliding of democracy goes hand in hand with a significant deterioration in the state of freedom of expression and media freedom. The possibility of unhindered public debate between all parts of society, together with the ability of independent journalists from all backgrounds to report freely on matters of public interest is a crucial indicator of a well-functioning democracy. With authoritarianism on the rise, some politicians and public officials have actively sought to discredit and vilify independent media, while crowding the media landscape with false or biased information, in an attempt to silence their critics and sow distrust in independent qualitative journalistic reporting. This worrying trend highlights the urgent need to defend the crucial role of the media in a democracy to control the powers that be. This session will focus on the ability for journalists to do their work in a safe and independent way as a precondition for media freedom, while aiming at exploring innovative ideas, mechanisms, policies and practices to actively nourish and further a pluralistic media landscape to revive democracy and media freedom.

#### **Themes to guide the discussions for this session:**

- *What is the link between democracy and media freedom?*
- *Why is it significant that the media are able to report on public gatherings?*
- *What measures are needed to improve the working conditions for journalists, to be able to perform their important role in society?*
- *Attacks against journalists pose serious challenges to media freedom, democracy and security. How to ensure the safety of journalists, as a safeguard for democracy?*

16.30 – 17.30

**CLOSING SESSION**

*Reports from the working sessions*

*Comments from the floor*

*Closing remarks*

17.30

Closing of the meeting

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