

DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

**Statement
at the Working Session 1 *Fundamental freedoms I*
of the OSCE 2006 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, 2 October 2006**

Mr. Moderator,

We thank our Representative on Freedom of the Media for his expose of horizontal issues that we face in the OSCE area. We appreciate his omni-directional approach. Delegation of the Republic of Armenia has always been interested in this subject and lent its support to the Representative and his Office, which does not necessarily mean that we are always in agreement with him.

If negotiations on the mandate of the Representative could have been carried out today our Delegation would have insisted on the notion of 'independence of the media' to be inserted in it in addition to the notion of 'freedom of the media'. Problems outlined by our Representative in the cluster of 'rule of law and administrative abuse of media' are witness to the importance of such a particular emphasis.

We would encourage looking further into the economic independence of the media in the OSCE area but not limiting discussion on the economic aspects only. Transparency in ownership and financing aspects may contribute to enhancing credibility of mass media. This is an area where the Representative can cooperate with our Coordinator of the OSCE Economic and Environmental activities to further cross-dimensionality in our work. Similarly, we can encourage such cross-dimensionality in our field operations.

In this same vein, we support 'Media as Business' as a topic for this year's South Caucasus Annual Media Conference, which is a very useful initiative in itself that promotes regional cooperation in our complicated region.

Our Delegation applauds Representative Haraszty and his Office for their activities on the libel and defamation decriminalization; the libel matrix created by the Office provides us with an overview of the situation throughout the OSCE region. We welcome the new initiative of the Representative on secrecy legislation and expect his Office to produce a similar tool on this subject.

Mr. Moderator,

We strongly support our distinguished Turkish colleague on what he said on hate speech: we join his call to combat vigilantly hate speech to prevent the horrendous crime of genocide from occurring. We wish such an international public discourse had existed hundred years ago. We would also encourage the Representative to address issue of hate speech and war-mongering in the context of conflicts that exist in the OSCE area.

The cartoon crisis that evolved early this year had again brought issue of tolerance and respect to inter-religious and inter-cultural differences to the forefront of our agenda. We agree that media self-regulation can be one of the possible ways to address this challenge. Nevertheless we find it better to encourage action in order to prevent habitual 'self-regulation' mantra not to deflect from the need to respect others' sensitivities.

We regret to notice that this Statement is the only one that addresses directly issues that our Representative on Freedom of the Media brought in front of us. Unfortunately, the same scenario is getting repeated from year to year: there is an address that nobody got interested in, followed by statements of some participating States that find it necessary to teach others how to behave and others responding in outrage to the criticism in their direction, and NGOs that sound hopeless in their complaints on the situation in some individual countries. It looks we walk in circles, and circles are vicious. We need to address this issue in order to make our work more efficient.

Mr. Moderator, let us exercise our right of reply to the US Delegation in order not to make an additional request for the floor. A1+ TV is now queuing up in Strasbourg to be heard in the European Court of Human Rights. In line with Armenia's commitments to the Council of Europe, the Government will accept any ruling of the Court on this issue.

On the second issue: being a citizen of Armenia employed by the Government I am concerned about any attempt to undermine media in my country that is heading toward an electoral cycle as much as those editors and NGO activists who released their appeal on July 18. Nevertheless, I resent any attempts to connect any incidents to the Government of Armenia coined in the US statement as 'growing official pressure on journalists who criticize the Armenian authorities'.

I thank you, Mr. Moderator.