



The Representative on Freedom of the Media
Miklós Haraszti

Vienna, 03 May 2009

Address by Miklós Haraszti

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

To the conference on “Freedom of Media in Bosnia and Herzegovina – 2009”, organized in Sarajevo and Banja Luka by the Mediacentar Sarajevo and the Organization ‘BH Journalists’ on the occasion of 03 May, the International Press Freedom Day.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I feel honoured for having been invited to contribute to this conference on freedom of the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which unfortunately I could not attend in person. The organizers chose the best moment for such an event. It is not only that the event coincides with the International Press Freedom Day; more importantly, the last months have seen a deterioration of the media freedom situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This conference provides a forum to address the numerous problems at the right time.

Since my visit to the country in February 2007 and last year’s conference on media freedom in Sarajevo that I attended, the implementation of necessary media legislation is still lagging behind. Particularly needed is the institutional reform of the public service broadcasting system which is in a state of paralysis. The last months also saw growing attempts to politicize the Federation RTV, to undermine the independence of the Communications Regulatory Agency, and a growing number of physical and verbal attacks against journalists.

These problems are not inherent to Bosnia and Herzegovina and are observed in many countries in transition. But the de-politicization of the broadcasting governance is particularly important in Bosnia and Herzegovina where the public service broadcasting has a unifying function in a fragmented environment.

What is required is more political will, fewer turf battles and a true commitment to media freedom and to the political independence of media. The government together with the international community and the media should strive to remove obstacles to further integration of the public broadcasting system.

Having said this, it is of course equally indispensable for public broadcasters to strive for balance, objectivity and fairness and to set an example for professional reporting beyond ethnic divides serving all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

EoT