



10th SOUTH CAUCASUS MEDIA CONFERENCE: Reflecting on OSCE media freedom commitments

**Tbilisi, Georgia
11-12 November 2013**

10th ANNIVERSARY DECLARATION

The 10th South Caucasus Media Conference, organized by the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in co-operation with the OSCE Office in Baku and OSCE Office in Yerevan, was held on 11-12 November 2013 in Tbilisi, Georgia.

More than 80 participants, including journalists, civil society representatives, government officials, members of parliament and academia from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia and international media experts convened for the two-day event.

This important annual event has been held in Tbilisi since 2004. Throughout the years, the conferences have addressed various topics central to media freedom, including “International standards of freedom of information”, “Pluralism and Internet governance”, “Access to information and new technologies”, “Journalism education” and others.

To mark the 10th anniversary, the focus of the conference was a retrospective look at OSCE media freedom commitments and their implementation across the region.

The conference participants also addressed some of the most pressing media freedom issues in the region, such as the safety of journalists, Internet freedom, access to information and independence of public service broadcasters and regulators. Conference participants also explored international standards and national practices regarding issues related to digital switchover and media self-regulation at the Master Class and Roundtable, respectively.

The Conference participants:

1. Welcome the fact that the authorities, representatives of the media, civil society and academia from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia took part in the conference and discussed important media freedom issues in the spirit of co-operation.
2. Condemn attacks, harassment and intimidation against journalists and other media actors and appeal to authorities to publicly denounce every case of violence and ensure swift and effective investigations to prevent the fostering of a climate of fear and impunity.
3. Call on governments to improve national laws and bring them in line with OSCE commitments and refrain from criminalizing journalistic activity, including imprisonment of journalists.

4. Call on governments to refrain from supporting any manifestation of anti-Semitism, xenophobic and racist propaganda through the media and computer systems, as well as refrain from implementing extremism laws that restrict freedom of the media.
5. Urge authorities to ensure that journalists, as well as bloggers and others involved in journalism, are able carry out their activities in safe environment, recognizing that freedom of expression applies both offline and online.
6. Underline the importance of the right of access to information and call on governments to facilitate wider dissemination of information.
7. Support the idea of the Internet as open and public forum for freedom of speech and expression and recommend that the authorities refrain from restrictively regulating online content.
8. Underline the responsibility of the authorities to create and sustain a legal and regulatory environment that will guarantee integrity, political, editorial and financial independence of public service broadcasters.
9. Call on governments to provide a variety of sources of information for the population during the transition to digital broadcasting, taking into account the interests of non-state and regional television and radio broadcasters, to take practical steps to increase pluralism of content and prevent concentration of ownership in broadcast entities.
10. Highlight the importance of effective institutions of self-regulation, such as press councils, which should work in a consultative and inclusive manner, without state interference.
11. Stress the importance of the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media continuing to organize the South Caucasus Media Conferences, master classes, roundtables, and trainings and recommend taking further steps to provide a clear mechanism to assess the effectiveness of recommendations passed during these events to ensure greater effect on media freedom in the region.

11 November 2013