



Vienna, 23 September 2014

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**National statement by Sweden as delivered by Ambassador
Fredrik Löjdquist to the 2014 Human Dimension
Implementation Meeting, Warsaw 23 September 2014, Working
Session 2, on Freedom of Expression**

While aligning with the EU statement let me, in my national capacity, take this opportunity to personally and on behalf of my government once again thank you Dunja and your team for your tireless efforts in the service of freedom of the media, your integrity and courage.

The right of every individual to freedom of expression lies at the very heart of the OSCE concept of comprehensive security. Without respect for this, and other fundamental freedoms, there can be no security, neither for individual human beings, nor for states. Respect for fundamentals freedoms and rights on the one hand and security and stability on the other are intrinsically interlinked in the concept of comprehensive security, which is the unique value of the OSCE.

Nevertheless, we see how these rights and principles are being violated, increasingly so, and in some places not seldom blatantly so.

Sadly, this may not come as a surprise: free expression is among many other things used to uncover corruption and abuse, to point out shortcomings of government policies, and to unveil lies and propaganda that surround e.g. internal repression and external aggression. For those, who are not ready to defend their actions in the open, free expression becomes a threat and must thus be reined in, controlled and stymied.

Since we met in this forum a year ago, the fear of the truth has increasingly become policy in some participating States. Those wanting to express their views freely are harassed, put into prison, tortured, threatened to death or

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even killed. Internet is blocked, controlled or otherwise “managed”, media outlets are being forced to close. Self-censorship is often exercised as a consequence. To turn a blind eye to this is to condone the perpetrators. And we all lose, because of these violations we have access to less and less reliable information, a weaker public debate and flawed sub-optimal decision making. Needless to say, new technologies do not change the right to exercise these human rights, as laid out in the UN: the same applies online as offline.

We see how information and propaganda warfare of an Orwellian scale has become a weapon accompanying the external military aggression against Ukraine. We have also seen that a free media and freedom of expression is the best way to fight and resist the lies and propaganda. And we have seen that journalists trying to find out the truth have been beaten up, some just in the recent days and weeks.

This trend must, unequivocally, be reversed. The fact that these principles and commitments are violated is **not** an argument for changing them, or watering them down, it just underlines the need to uphold them firmly. And that is done also by pointing out when they have been violated.

To **help us** uphold our common principles and commitments we have all collectively and by consensus as participating states set up the autonomous institution of the Representative of Freedom of the Media.

Sweden will resist any attempt to weaken this profoundly important institution. The tireless work of the Representative and her staff - to remind us of our commitments, express concern about our shortcomings and assist us in finding solutions to our challenges - is a cornerstone of the OSCE, contributing to our common vision of a security community, based on shared values.

Thank you