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THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION OF THE
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**Forward-looking discussions
Session 4: Freedom of media**

Freedom of the media in the Republic of Tajikistan

In the twenty-first century, which is regarded as the century of information, the Republic of Tajikistan, as a fully fledged member of the international community, cannot ignore the expansion of the information space and the development of the media. Particular attention is being paid to the development of independent media. At a meeting with representatives of the country's intelligentsia in March 2008, President Emomali Rahmon said: "The number of independent mass media has grown steadily in the last few years. This is a good thing, because freedom of the media is one of the fundamental indicators of the development of democratic society. On their own initiative, independent mass media discuss the problems that need to be resolved by State bodies. This is a good start, inasmuch as freedom of thought and a critical attitude to events forestall many deficiencies and help to improve the situation."

There are 211 officially registered newspapers (135 independent), 111 magazines (69 independent), 7 press agencies (6 independent), 28 television stations (19 independent) and 16 radio stations (9 independent) operating in the country today.

There are also other private media in Tajikistan at present, which stop operating after a certain time for lack of funds.

A number of laws and regulations have been adopted in the last few years in connection with the development of mass media and their greater access to information, particularly official information. These include the Law on the Press and Other Mass Media, the Law on Television and Radio, the Law on Information, the Law on the Protection of Information, the Law on Information Technology, the Law on Access to Information, the Law on Advertising, the State Information Concept of the Republic of Tajikistan, the State Strategy on Information and Communication Technologies for the Development of Tajikistan, Presidential Decree No. 622 of 7 February 2009 on the Reaction by Officials to

Critical and Analytical Material by the Mass Media, and others. These laws and regulations apply equally to State and free media.

Order No. RP 1677 of 4 March 2005 by the Head of State mandated the heads of ministries and departments and the local State executive bodies to hold compulsory quarterly press conferences with the participation of representatives of State and non-State media. All of these quarterly press conferences are carried out by the office of the President.

To date there have been no prosecutions by the State of journalists, mass media or human rights defenders for their professional activities, although private civil proceedings have been instigated in connection with both State and non-State media.

Information and communication technologies are opening up new possibilities today in the Republic of Tajikistan for stable human development. The networks have been expanded, which has led to the search for new modes and possibilities for regulating the activity of all branches of the media.

Access to the Internet is quite well developed in Tajikistan. Internet connection from the home is possible in practically all cities and regional centres, although not everyone can afford it. For this reason many Internet cafés are springing up to provide public access. According to the Ministry of Transport and Communications, which is the State body responsible for supervising communications and information technology, there were 954,529 registered Internet users as of 1 October 2010. Altogether, the Association of Internet Service Providers estimates that 1.8 million people have access to the Internet.

The telecommunications sector, one of the most important sectors of the national economy with a direct influence on economic growth and development, is evolving more and more rapidly.

Under Government Decision No. 486 of 7 November 1996 on measures to create a public satellite telecommunications system a programme for the development of national television has been elaborated and is now being successfully implemented. Digital satellite television using the MPEG-2 system was launched that year, permitting the transmission of Tajikistan television stations to poorly accessible mountain regions.

Satellite dishes and antennae are also widely used to receive foreign television stations, from the United States of America, the United Kingdom, India, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and many others.

Government decisions were passed in 2009 approving the State Television and Radio Policy and in 2010 approving the Programme for Implementation of the State Television and Radio Policy for 2010 to 2015, which provides for the complete digitization of Tajik television and radio within five years.

The mass media in Tajikistan continue to enjoy extensive freedom.

Thank you for your attention.