

PC.DEL/621/11
23 June 2011

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANVAR AZIMOV,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

23 June 2011

In response to the statement by Ms. Dunja Mijatović

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome the distinguished OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatović, and have listened with interest to the detailed account of the work of her office in the last six months and the plans for the future.

Above all we should like to congratulate Ms. Mijatović on the successful recent conference in Vilnius on the safety of journalists. This was an important event that permitted a valuable exchange of opinions on the issues involved. Russia participated fully in the work of the conference.

We agree with the assessment contained in the report that free mass media play an important role in safeguarding freedom of expression and pluralism in modern democratic society. We also agree that there is a need for effective measures to prevent violence against journalists. It is our opinion that such incidents should not only be condemned but also actively countered by offering practical assistance in response to appeals by States. In spite of the fact that crimes committed against representatives of the media prove in practice to be complex affairs, it is important to attempt to bring the perpetrators and masterminds ineluctably to justice.

The problem of ensuring the safety of journalists, which is directly linked to the general level of crime, is a serious source of concern for Russian society. The recurrent incidents provoke a strong public reaction. The Russian President and Government, who are charged with the task of eradicating crimes of this nature, react immediately to every case of violence against journalists, and results have been achieved in specific instances. Examples include the arrest of the alleged perpetrator of the crime against Anna Politkovskaya, the verdict by Moscow municipal court in the case of murder of the lawyer Stanislav Markelov and the journalist Anastasia Baburova, the increase in the level of activity of the federal regulatory agency in defending the mass media and the rights of journalists, the decisions of the Supreme Court on the strict observance of the right to a fair and public trial, and finally the ongoing and wide-ranging reform of the Russian law enforcement agencies.

In other words, the measures taken by all official sectors are designed to improve the legal protection of citizens and, in particular, to establish favourable conditions for journalists to work safely and professionally.

I shall not offer any detailed comments today on the section of the report on pluralism in new media, particularly on the Internet, which is the focus of the forthcoming Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting in Vienna, in which the Russian delegation will take an active part. I should like to mention just two aspects here. First, discussion of an issue as important as Internet regulation should not be launched by the OSCE executive bodies on their own initiative but should be carried out at the instigation of the participating States. This is why the Permanent Council and Ministerial Council exist. Second, although there is no doubt about the need to ensure freedom of the Internet, I should like to point out that there can be exceptions to any rule. It is inadmissible for the World Wide Web to be used to incite hatred, propagate extremist – particularly misanthropic – ideology, encourage violence, terrorism, or the spread of pornography, etc. It is inadmissible for the rights of individuals or society as a whole to be infringed under the guise of protecting freedom of expression.

In conclusion, we should like to hope that the Representative and her office will look in their work not only to the assessments of the different non-governmental organizations but also to studies by specialist State bodies. During her recent visit to Moscow, Ms. Mijatović had the opportunity to witness for herself the openness of the Russian authorities to constructive dialogue and co-operation.

Thank you for your attention.