

**Opening Remarks by Ambassador Ivo Petrov, Head of the OSCE Centre in  
Ashgabat, at the 14<sup>th</sup> Central Asia Media Conference  
Ashgabat, 5 – 6 July 2012**

Distinguished Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers, and Minister of  
Foreign Affairs Meredov,  
Distinguished OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Mijatović,  
Excellencies, colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, let me warmly welcome you to the  
hospitable capital of Turkmenistan and to the 14<sup>th</sup> Central Asia Media Conference.

This is the first time that Ashgabat hosts the OSCE's Central Asia Media  
Conference and I would like to take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude  
to the Government of Turkmenistan for the support to this important event and for  
the wonderful hospitality.

This Conference is a good example of the ever increasing cooperation between  
Turkmenistan and the OSCE in the area of media. It is a special privilege to  
welcome Ms. Mijatović whose visits to Turkmenistan in 2011 opened new  
opportunities for the dialogue between Turkmenistan and the OSCE on media-  
related issues. The Centre used these new opportunities and in 2012, together with  
the Office of the Representative, launched a project aimed at assisting the country  
in modernizing its media legislation and we are looking forward to further  
contributing to the country's efforts in upgrading it.

During the last few years, the Centre has also supported a number of successful  
projects aimed at enhancing the capacity of national media. The Centre has  
established fruitful cooperation with the "international journalism" department at  
the Institute of International Relations, and it is a special pleasure for us to see the  
young faces of students from this Institute among the conference's participants  
today.

The Office of the Representative chooses every year a topic which is of particular  
interest. The topic of this year's conference is transition from traditional to online  
media. Nowadays it is impossible to overestimate the importance of this topic.

We live in an age of swift technological progress and our media environment is  
changing faster than we even would have imagined ten years ago. Throughout our  
diverse world, online media - while not replacing the traditional media - are  
creating a very strong competition to them. Internet is becoming a primary source  
of information for more and more people. Online analogues of various newspapers  
frequently supersede their print peers that we used to read over our morning  
coffee. Nowadays the first thing we do in the morning is switching on our laptops  
and computers and checking our emails and favorite news portals. With the  
development of social media, more and more people can practice the job of a

journalist, if even not professionally, and take an increasingly active part in the process of information sharing.

While offering new opportunities, the new technologies place, at the same time, a great responsibility on media managers and journalists producing news as well as on governments whose regulatory policies shouldn't impede media pluralism.

The Central Asia Media Conferences offer a valuable platform for the exchanges of views and experiences on this matter and we look forward to lively discussions among different stakeholders.

It is very symbolic that this year's Central Asia Media Conference is being held a few days before Turkmenistan will mark the 20-year anniversary of its signing the Helsinki Final Act and becoming a full-fledged participant of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), the OSCE's predecessor, and herewith assuming commitments and responsibilities deriving from its participation in the Organization.

The Helsinki Final Act of 1975 outlined a number of provisions related to the freedom of the media. Over the years, the 56 OSCE participating States broadened these commitments to reflect the changes both in the OSCE area and in the global media environment, but the fundamental commitments set out by the Helsinki Final Act remain as relevant today as almost forty years ago.

Our today's conference as well as other events held by the OSCE and its participating States to address media-related issues constitutes an important part of the Organization's activities aimed at promoting the media freedom and pluralism and assisting participating States in implementing their media-related commitments.

By hosting the 14<sup>th</sup> Central Asia Media Conference, Turkmenistan, in its turn, is demonstrating the country's interest and resolve to take a more active part in the Organization's activities.

In conclusion, let me wish you a very interesting and productive conference. I would also like to invite all our guests to explore Ashgabat, the beautiful, rapidly changing capital of Turkmenistan, and get acquainted with this amazing country and its wonderful hospitable people.

Thank you for your attention.