



PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF PORTUGAL TO THE OSCE

1422nd meeting of the Permanent Council

11 May 2023

Statement by Portugal on the Report by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

1. Just last week, UNSG António Guterres said (and I quote): “All our freedom depends on press freedom. But in every corner of the world, freedom of the press is under attack.” (end of quote).
2. Madam Representative, you are the 5th mandate-holder since the 1996 Lisbon Summit Declaration agreed on the urgent need for a RFoM. We do hope that, within our OSCE, you will continue giving an essential contribution to the Human Dimension, as freedom of expression is the driving force behind all other human rights.
3. As you yourself put it, there can be no Security without Media Freedom. That is to say, your mandate spans more than one area. RFoM’s work is closely related not only to the crucial Human Dimension but also to our OSCE’s fragile, and indeed threatened, 1st Dimension. One more reason to stress there can be no fully functioning OSCE without all of its institutions in place.
4. The unique role you fulfill has been recognized as a benchmark for other regions and the UN. We salute in this context the Joint Declaration on Media and Democracy issued at UN headquarters last week, strongly influenced by the RFoM. That is how one can make the OSCE relevant again, as we all agree that, in addition to their separate responsibilities to their individual societies, States have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level.



PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF PORTUGAL TO THE OSCE

5. The work of the RFoM is not without hurdles, as media freedom is at the core of the OSCE priorities, a cause that has been relentlessly pursued by you and your predecessors, in fulfilling your responsibilities in a professional and balanced manner.

6. We particularly welcome the fact that, in upholding the Human Dimension, the RFoM strives to carry out her responsibilities first and foremost with an emphasis on a cooperative approach, giving priority to dialogue and advocating and promoting full compliance with OSCE principles and commitments regarding freedom of expression and free media. But also, whenever necessary, through access to, and contacts with State authorities, which allows for a direct and frank interaction to address serious cases of non-compliance. Today's report is testimony to this.

7. We appreciate that in the course of the last six months the RFoM continued to implement in full her mandate. Your remarks are an incentive for improvement. No one can claim to be perfect and there are no perfect States. However, progress is only possible when we are ready to address our shortcomings in good faith. Your statements and your quiet diplomacy have always been directed towards improving what matters most – safeguarding free and independent voices in our societies. This is more needed than ever and we note your daily work is closely related to the increasingly relevant motto of our Chairman-in-Office: "It's about people".

8. Last week the world celebrated the 30th anniversary of World Press Freedom Day, against the background of a multitude of systemic challenges and threats to freedom of expression and media freedom – a "downward spiral" as you call it – , amid a weakness of true multilateralism, not to mention the sad reality of a full-fledged war, a war that has unleashed widespread death, destruction and displacement, and that has roiled this Organisation.

9. As we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the RFoM's work is more relevant than ever in rekindling in the OSCE



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area the spirit, impulse and vitality of that milestone of our common History. It is our collective responsibility to ensure it will be possible to turn the tide on the backsliding of democracy, the regression of media freedom and the crumbling of our joint principles and commitments.

10. The RFoM's mandate is closely related to a fundamental principle all our nations have pledged to respect almost half a century ago in the Helsinki Final Act, and in the absence of which it would become increasingly difficult to justify the existence of the OSCE. Hence, it is of paramount importance for all participating States to preserve our common acquis, including the smooth functioning and adequate financing of the autonomous institutions. As we strongly believe that upholding the Human Dimension is an essential factor for peace and justice, we will strive to support the RFoM's mandate in the next semester and beyond.