

PC.SHDM.DEL/26/16
7 November 2016

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AT THE
OSCE SUPPLEMENTARY HUMAN DIMENSION MEETING ON
FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA WITH
A SPECIAL FOCUS ON CONFLICT SITUATIONS, INCLUDING
PROTECTION OF JOURNALISTS AND REPORTING
DURING ARMED CONFLICT**

Vienna, 27 and 28 October 2016

Session I: Safety of journalists in armed conflict

Mr. Chairperson,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We thank the Chairmanship, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) for organizing this important event.

It was not possible in just one session of the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw to adequately discuss current problems regarding freedom of expression and the protection of journalists. There has been a considerable build-up of problems in this area, particularly over the past two or three years.

We are looking forward to serious and constructive work, to which the Russian Federation is willing to contribute.

Freedom of speech is a vital component of any democratic society. The exercise of this right is inextricably linked with the existence of independent and protected media. In that connection, we are extremely disturbed by the growing frequency of killing, abuse, and other violence towards media workers, cases of which have increased significantly throughout the world in the past few years.

Violence against journalists during armed conflicts is unacceptable. We see this above all in the hotbeds of instability in the Middle East, in the incessant conflicts in the countries of Africa, and also in the OSCE area. It should not be forgotten that in difficult politico-military situations media workers perform the vital function of informing the international community about humanitarian problems and the suffering of the civilian population.

States have the basic responsibility for ensuring the sanctity of journalists in extreme situations and for protecting human rights in general. Helping them in this is one of the priority tasks of the relevant international universal and regional organizations. Russia has repeatedly called on the OSCE to exert pressure on the authorities of participating States that use repressive measures against media workers for them to put an end to such practices. We thank the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatović, for her efforts to protect the rights of Russian journalists.

The key international documents on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts and media workers in extreme situations are United Nations Security Council resolutions 1738 (2006) and 2222 (2015), and also the 1949 Geneva Conventions and Protocol I to them from 1977.

Humanitarian institutions and civil society play an important role in permanently monitoring cases of violence against journalists, including in conflict and post-conflict situations, and providing assistance to media workers who have come to harm. Such initiatives should be given credit and deserve all-round support from States and the international community.

The security and safety of journalists could also be improved at the national level through preventive measures to increase the legal knowledge and professional ethics of journalists and the organization of training seminars, particularly on the subject of dealing with conflict situations. The creation of effective mechanisms of co-operation between State structures and civil society institutions plays an important role in this process.

We are convinced, however, that the curtailment of the conflict situations themselves and the political tension would radically change the situation in this sphere.

We are pleased to note the point already raised in this auditorium about the inexpediency of introducing additional international law standards in this area and of reviewing the status itself of journalists, who according to the norms of international humanitarian law are regarded in conflicts as civilians and enjoy the corresponding rights and protection. We believe that the necessary legal framework regulating the activities and status of journalists in conflict zones already exists. It is important to strive to ensure that these agreements are fulfilled and acceded to by those countries that have not already done so.

Thank you for your attention.