



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

Statement in response to the Representative for the Freedom of the Media
Mr. Miklos Haraszti

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
4 March 2010

Thank you Mr Chairman,

Let me first join previous speakers in warmly welcoming Mr. Haraszti back to the Permanent Council, sadly for the last time in his present capacity. We also join in the thanks for his latest – and last - report, which as usual provides us with a thorough overview of relevant developments in the OSCE region. We have always appreciated the broad and comprehensive manner in which the Representative has exercised his mandate throughout the OSCE area. Even in societies where media freedom is considered to be well established, there is no room for complacency, and Mr. Haraszti has been vigilant in striking down on worrisome events and tendencies wherever they have occurred, in a very objective and even-handed manner.

Let me assure you, Mr. Haraszti, how much we value your tireless and fearless efforts to protect and promote the freedom of expression and freedom of the media in our region, both with your interventions in specific cases and with all your advisory and inspirational activities, e.g. in the form of legal reviews and media conferences that have been carried out while you have been in charge of this institution. We have been impressed by the way you discharged the important responsibilities of your office, and you will be missed.

Mr Chairman,

We have today been gratified to see that the process for finding Mr. Haraszti's successor is now reaching its successful conclusion, through the launching of a silence procedure to appoint Ms. Dunja Mijatovic as the new OSCE Representative for the Freedom of the Media.

We firmly believe that this is a very good choice, and we are confident that she possesses all the qualities necessary to make her tenure a success. We are particularly pleased to see a woman at the top of one of the OSCE institutions. It was about time. We pledge our continued and full support to the institution under the new leadership.

Mr. Chairman,

Freedom of expression and freedom of the media are cornerstones of any democratic system, and one measure of the health of a democracy is the existence of an environment in which such media can flourish. It is, therefore, a cause of serious concern to us that so many of the interventions which the Representative has made since his last report to the Permanent Council concern violent attacks against or killings of journalists, dubious or even unlawful imprisonment of journalists, and the closure of independent newspapers due to huge fines and subsequent freezing of assets in civil lawsuits. All this may lead to self-censorship and in fact censorship which undermines the basic values of democratic societies. We also share the Representative's concerns about the increasing monopolisation of the media in some participating States. This is a threat to independent journalism and pluralism, no matter if they are state or private monopolies.

We are disappointed with the continuing deterioration of freedom of the media in several participating States and the failure by many of these countries to address the shortcomings that Mr. Haraszi pointed out in previous reports. We urge all the participating States to comply with their commitments in the field of media freedom and the freedom of expression and to cooperate fully with the RFOM.

Finally Mr. Chairman,

Let me take this opportunity to pay one more, very sincere tribute to Mr. Haraszi, supported by his competent and dedicated staff, for the valuable work he has carried out as our Representative of the Freedom of the Media in protecting freedom of expression, freedom of the media and human rights defenders. We wish him every success in his future endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman