

Delegation of Switzerland

**STATEMENT BY  
THE DELEGATION OF SWITZERLAND AT THE 956th MEETING OF  
THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

13 June 2013

**In response to the report by Ms. Dunja Mijatović,  
OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media**

Mr. Chairperson,

I should like to thank Ms. Dunja Mijatović warmly for the presentation of her report, which provides a good reflection of the current challenges to freedom of expression and thought throughout the OSCE region.

Freedom of expression is an essential pillar of any democratic society; it is a basic prerequisite for its development and the fulfilment of the potential of each and every citizen. The media help to disseminate different opinions and promote cultural diversity, dialogue and tolerance. These principles are inherent in the defence of all other rights. Infringements of this right therefore represent a denial of democracy and of the values that unite us here within the OSCE. It is for that reason that we encourage all participating States to bring their national legislation into line with the relevant international standards.

In today's world, and this includes the OSCE area, we are forced to acknowledge that freedom of expression is threatened on several fronts.

Once again we must express our concern at the rise in the number of attacks on journalists. The acts of harassment and intimidation not only affect the actual victims but also the entire population, who are deprived of sources of information. Violence persists where there is no justice: the question of impunity is thus once again at the heart of the problem. It is crucial that any violence against journalists be systematically investigated and the persons responsible tried and prosecuted, otherwise freedom of the press will simply remain an empty promise. States must also take all the necessary measures without delay to prevent such acts from occurring. Further recommendations were elaborated during the conference co-organized by Switzerland, Austria and Poland with your office last April in Warsaw. We applaud your excellent work in this area, Madam Representative, and would encourage you to continue your constructive engagement with all the participating States.

Mr. Chairperson,

The emergence and development of new media present unprecedented opportunities and challenges. New media go beyond the terms of reference of the press and traditional media. Nevertheless, the role of the media has not changed in any way. Regardless of the technology or the media utilized, States have a duty to protect freedom of expression, whether online or offline. Your office and the Chairmanships understand this well and have demonstrated their commitment by proposing several discussion platforms on this question in recent years. Despite all our efforts, the 57 participating States have been unable to reach a consensus on how to deal with these new challenges. We find this situation regrettable and urge participating States to take a constructive approach to strengthening our commitments regarding freedom of the media. We hope that we shall be able to adopt a ministerial decision on this subject in Kyiv.

Lastly, allow me, Madam Representative, to congratulate you again on the extension of your mandate for the next three years. Switzerland welcomes your excellent work and your objectivity, transparency and professionalism in carrying out the mission entrusted to you by the participating States. Thanks to your efforts, Ms. Mijatović, the OSCE has gained importance on the international stage in promoting freedom of the media. Your committed and constructive work with all the participating States to the east and to the west of Vienna has strengthened the credibility of the institution and its recognition far beyond the OSCE area. We particularly welcome your prompt response to the new challenges enumerated above and support the allocation of the necessary resources to your office so that you can achieve your objectives. We pay tribute to the events organized by your office, especially the seminar in Warsaw, the conference on Internet freedom held this February and the regional conferences in the Caucasus and Central Asia in which we participate. Each of these events illustrates the reactive capability and quality of your response to these situations. We therefore reiterate our support for your mandate and welcome your commitment and your efforts to promote freedom of the media. You can count on our continued support.