

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2016**Statement of the Czech Republic****Working Session 6: Fundamental Freedoms I**

The Czech Republic aligns herself with the statement of the European Union to which we would like to make some comments in our national capacity.

We echo the concern expressed by the EU and other partners over the worsening situation with regard to freedom of expression and opinion, growing persecutions and restrictions on civil society actors and safety of journalists in some OSCE participating states.

We would like to thank the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms Dunja Mijatović and her team for excellent job done so far. As a tangible expression of our support for the mandate and activities of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, we have provided voluntary funds to the Open Journalism project.

For the Czech Republic, the support of independent media has been a long term priority. The MFA through its Transition Promotion Program continuously supports a wide range of media activities in the Eastern Europe and will continue to do so. Given the intensity of the ongoing disinformation campaign in the Russian state-controlled media, the long term support for fact-based reporting and independent media in the Eastern Europe has become ever more important.

Willingness to cooperate and to engage in new initiatives can bring about new openings for professional journalism. Therefore the Czech Republic is trying to foster the cooperation among actors such as Free Press for Eastern Europe, Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty or Prague Civil Society Centre. New common initiatives however can not be successful if they are not coupled with a long-term commitment and direct support to local independent media.

It is the responsibility of all governments to ensure the journalists' safety and to guarantee their independence through a legal framework that is consistent with relevant OSCE commitments, as well as with other international obligations. Therefore, we are concerned by any restrictive laws and other legal steps limiting free media and freedom of expression.

The Czech Republic has also been active within multilateral fora. For the past three years, we have been the main sponsor of the HRC resolution on equal participation in political and public affairs. At the current Human Rights Council session, we are presenting once again an updated resolution. This resolution recognizes inter alia the right of everyone to freedom of expression as an essential condition for equal participation which must be protected.