



***Statement***  
***Delivered by Ambassador Vesko Garčević,***  
***Permanent Representative of Montenegro, at the Permanent Council***  
***Meeting, No. 719<sup>th</sup>, 3 July 2008***

On behalf of my delegation, I would like to welcome the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Mr. Miklos Haraszti and thank him for his written and oral statements that have given us an overview on the media scene in the OSCE Region. As usual he has done it in a very comprehensive and balanced fashion. At the same time we are looking forward to his upcoming visit to Montenegro as well as fruitful discussions on planned round tables and meetings with various counterparts from Government and the media representatives in my country.

Mr. Chairman,

As experience shows, countries in transition face numerous challenges that require time and social consensus to be overcome. This is the case in the media sphere as well. As part of the EU comprehensive reform agenda the media scene in Montenegro has been reformed to a wide degree in accordance with international standards, providing so a sound environment for media freedom. Most of the newspapers and TV stations have been privatized, with the State TV broadcaster being in the process of transformation to a public service. There is a wide opportunity for voicing all kinds of different opinions and views by the representatives of various social, political or national groups. It goes without saying that it includes critics, sometimes very harsh and sour, against the Government and its performance.

Having that in mind let me briefly refer to the case, mentioned in Mr. Haraszti's Report, of the private law suit against Zeljko Ivanović, the director of the media house "Vijesti". After having been assaulted by group of assailants, Mr. Ivanovic made a public unsubstantiated allegations and

very severe accusations against the current Prime Minister Djukanović. At the time when this disturbing incident took place Djukanovic was a private citizen and did not yet resume his Office as a Prime Minister. From legal point of view, the law suit was an action brought by a private citizen versus another private citizen.

In meantime, the case of attack on Mr. Ivanovic has been closed and resolved with the perpetrators serving time for the offence. The law suit itself is still, however, being deliberated before the court. Therefore, we would rather restrain of any judgement if the final court decision could impose the potentially disproportionate pecuniary award.

Furthermore, as the above mentioned legal proceeding has been going on before the respective court, the same media house - "Vijesti" has been licensed by the Montenegrin Government to launch a TV station and broadcast "round the clock" news in the CNN style. No need to say that the TV station has the same editorial policy as the daily "Vijesti" – offering, almost on daily basis critic of the Government's work. Therefore, this case, then, in our belief can be seen in a wider context than it may initially seem so, other than purely media related one aimed at curbing the media freedom.

In no way disputing the right to a freedom of speech there is, however, a need to distinguish between the right to do so and certain responsibility that every media representative inherently carries, first of all as an individual, a responsible member of society. These needs reflect well known dilemmas that are present in every society and have constantly been a subject of many OSCE discussions and can not, like in this particular case, offer always a clear cut or easy answer.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, we wish to thank again Mr. Haraszti for his address at today's PC and stress that we are open for continuous good cooperation with him and his Office. We are looking forward to his assessment of the forthcoming visit to Montenegro and wish him all success in his future work.