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## Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2017

Working Session 1:

### **Fundamental Freedoms I**

Warsaw, 11 September 2017

Declaration of the Swiss delegation

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Mr. Moderator,

In the name of Switzerland let me extend a warm welcome to the new OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mister Harlem Désir. Thank you for the report you presented today on the situation of freedom of expression and freedom of the media in the OSCE region. Switzerland fully appreciates and supports the mandate of your office. We wish you success in your important role as a voice for freedom of the press and the safety of journalists.

Recent developments in the OSCE region with regards to silencing of critical voices and crackdown on independent media have led to a worrying decrease in freedom of expression and free speech. Switzerland strongly condemns the continuing assaults on journalists, media workers and others who exercise their right to freedom of expression.

The repression of journalists violates not only the rights of journalists but the right of everyone to have free access to information. In this context, Switzerland is looking forward to the updated edition of the OSCE Guidebook on Safety of Journalists which is due to be published by the Office of the RFOM later this year.

Switzerland also actively supports the discussion on safety of journalists in the United Nations. We have co-sponsored the Human Rights Council resolution on safety of journalists in September last year as well as the UNESCO resolution to support the UN Plan of Action on the safety of journalists and the question of impunity in April this



year. Now that the normative work has been done by the UN and regional organizations such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe, Switzerland calls on all OSCE participating States to focus on the question of how to implement those standards at the country level as well as to enhance the sharing of good practices between the different international organizations.

Furthermore, disinformation and propaganda in the media pose numerous threats to democratic societies aiming at manipulating individuals and distorting public opinion. However, blocking or banning media outlets is not an answer to the phenomenon of “fake news”.

Statements by governments questioning the work of journalists and degrading the essential role the media plays in every democratic society only undermine the credibility of the media and could make journalists more vulnerable to being targeted with violence and abuse. Instead, OSCE participating States can refer to the various instruments and recommendations produced by the OSCE in this context such as the *Vienna Conclusions on Safety of Journalists and Media Ethics* from March this year, offering recommendations on how to improve the safety of journalists while strengthening self-regulation and professional ethics of journalists, to deepen media literacy of citizens and to counter hate speech.

Thank you.