



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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

As delivered by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1121st meeting of the Permanent Council,
01 December 2016

Mr. Chairman,

We welcome the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatović, back to the Permanent Council and thank her for presentation of the regular report on media related issues across the OSCE region.

Ukraine recognizes the fundamental importance of freedom of expression, and free, independent and pluralistic media as a core element of democracy. We wish to express high appreciation of our close cooperation with Ms. Mijatović in addressing a variety of issues related to the implementation of the relevant OSCE commitments.

The Ukrainian side gives serious attention to all issues raised by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Ms. Dunja Mijatović in her reports and takes consistent measures on a national level with a view to further enhancing freedom of the media and strengthening the safety of journalists in line with the OSCE commitments.

We welcome the recent visit of Ms. Dunja Mijatović to Ukraine in October 2016 and value our exchange of a broad range of media-related topics.

We thank Ms. Mijatović for her constant attention to numerous challenges facing the media and journalists in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

The Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the city of Sevastopol, illegally occupied by Russia and certain areas of Donbas, where the combined Russian-separatist forces imposed their de-facto control, experience severe restrictions on media freedom and clamp-down on free journalism, including harassment and violence against journalists. All independent media were forced to close and to leave the conflict-affected regions.

We are very concerned over the life and health of the Ukrainian journalist Mykola Semena, who remains detained by the occupying authorities in Crimea under the trumped-up charges of “separatism”. We urge the Russian occupation authorities to immediately release him and stop detention of journalists under fabricated charges.

We encourage the Representative on Media Freedom to continue to take all possible steps with a view to freeing the illegally detained journalists and media professionals, monitoring situation and protecting the rights of journalists in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the city of Sevastopol and in the Donbas region of Ukraine. The consistency and persistence of these efforts are particularly important in the current absence of permanent international monitoring in the illegally occupied Crimean peninsula.

Mr. Chairman,

We drew attention in the previous Permanent Council meetings to continuously shrinking space for human rights and freedoms in Russia, including media freedom and freedom of expression, which are being increasingly and systematically limited and restricted in the Russian Federation in contravention of its OSCE commitments.

The respective concerns are regularly expressed by international NGOs dealing with media freedom issues.

Yesterday we circulated more detailed information on cases of restriction of media freedom and violence against journalists in Russia in 2016.

The available facts prove yet again that Russian journalists face physical danger in the course of their work. Inadequate reaction to crimes against journalists breeds a climate of fear and injustice not only among victims of these attacks, but also among media professionals and the society at large.

Propaganda and additional punitive and restrictive measures over the past two years have had a chilling effect on open and free discussion, which is exacerbated by growing state efforts to control the space for media and expression. The Russian state-owned media use fakes and disinformation to instigate the sentiments of hatred towards Ukrainians, deliberately creating an image of enemy to justify the aggression. These sentiments pose many real dangers. In particular, they apparently led to the brutal murder of a Ukrainian citizen Roman Muzychenko by a group of 21 young nationalists in Moscow on 14 February 2015. Since then, the Russian authorities have not responded to numerous requests for update on investigation and bringing the responsible to justice.

We encourage the Representative on Freedom of the Media to give high attention to those issues threatening freedom of the media in Russia and posing serious risks to countries beyond.

The findings of the international Mapping Media Freedom Project, released this week, show that of all detentions and arrests of media professionals in 41 countries in the 3rd quarter of the year, 25% happened in Russia.

We are deeply concerned over the on-going ungrounded detention of the Ukrainian citizen and journalist Roman Sushchenko in Moscow on trumped-up charges of “espionage”. Roman Sushchenko is a resolute and independent defender of the freedom of speech, known for his exposure of Russia’s illegal actions against Ukraine. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine expressed a protest in

connection with the decision on extension of his illegal detention which was taken in a closed session court hearing on 28 November 2016.

Many international media organizations, including the International and European Federation of Journalists, the European Alliance of News Agencies and Reporters without Borders have called on Russia to free the Ukrainian reporter.

We call on the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to use all available instruments to facilitate his immediate release.

Mr. Chairman,

We commend the efforts of the Chairmanship and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media aimed at countering propaganda, including the relevant recommendations addressed to the participating States. We are convinced that the OSCE commitments must be developed to counter propaganda, which stifles free and pluralistic media.

In this connection we welcome the draft ministerial decisions on counteracting propaganda for war and hatred and on freedom of expression in the OSCE area, tabled by the German OSCE Chairmanship, and work for their adoption in Hamburg.

We wish to conclude by reiterating Ukraine's full support to the mandate of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. We support her work, assisted by her professional team, aimed at monitoring media developments in all OSCE participating States and promoting compliance with the OSCE media freedom commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.