

**7<sup>th</sup> MEDIA DEVELOPMENT FORUM**

**HEAD OF PRESENCE'S OPENING REMARKS**

**Rogner Hotel, Tirana, Antigonea I Room**

*25 November 2021*

Honourables, excellences, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, dear participants,

I am very glad to be here with you today in yet another important event in the field of media.

I am equally glad to emphasize our commitment to the cause of media freedom in Albania, after we declared this area of work a priority of our Presence. With the organization of this annual event, we clearly put our money where our mouth is, as an expression goes, being consistent with our declared commitment.

We tackle the media issues with a very professional approach and we keep the focus on Albanian media landscape only. And we are in very good company, the Ambassador from the Council of Europe; the colleagues from the EU Delegation; colleagues who are connected online from Vienna with the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media - thank you very much Jurgen, and all my respects to Teresa Ribeiro - and from Geneva with the representative of the European Broadcasting Union - thank you very much.

This is the second event within two months focusing on issues related to media. As you can all remember, just in October, we had the honour to host the South East Europe Media Conference (SEEMC) of the house, of the OSCE. And to recall, there we discussed disinformation and quality investigative journalism, safety and working conditions of journalists, attempts to silence women journalists online, women journalists and women media managers – actually, this is a fundamental day for women, for combating this horrible crime of violence against women, Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation as an increasing threat to independent media, the future of journalism, so, basically young perspectives on media.

Now and here we are picking up the thread by focusing on specifically two topics that we have seen from the agenda:

One is **Albanian media development**, in which we will discuss a series of perspectives on the main media freedom and media development challenges that Albania faced during the 2020-2021. We encourage positive partnerships and use of the international best practices. Media, society and the State need to engage together with each other in a spirit of constructiveness. And here I salute the participation of the spokesperson of the Albanian State Police, Mr. Gentian Mullai, to this event. It testifies for institutional openness. Thank you very much, all my gratitude! And it is an invitation to professional dialogue and co-operation. Striving to promote constructiveness is our main driver for action at the Presence, to build capacities that enable media to reach a high standard of professionalism in reporting, stay attuned to the needs of society, open up to youth. Along these lines of action, we have been working closely with you to develop the Albanian media and we look forward to a renewed impetus next year.

The second topic is **investigative journalism and fact-checking**; it is an undeniable priority for Albania I guess, to which the OSCE participating States pay particular attention to, and you and me also.

We are here to hear your views on the challenges that you confront and opportunities that you see in performing a high quality investigative journalism and how we can help you in your efforts.

It is through high quality relentless investigative journalism and fact-checking that media can bring a tangible contribution to the overarching causes of society, such as fighting corruption, making State institutions more cognizant of societal needs, bringing people's interests closer to the policy-making process.

Therefore, do let us know how we can help you to turn high-quality investigative journalism into an incontestable professional standard, while making fact-checking a permanent part of the investigative journalist's toolkit. Actually, I was reminded in Vienna when I took part in a major exercise at the beginning of September how important investigative journalism is for all the participating States. And I promised the participating States to go back to them next year within the same framework, within the same exercise, offering them tangible results. And so this asks even to my personal commitment, since I committed myself to the participating States.

Thank you for your participation and I look forward to constructive and fruitful discussions. And it will certainly be particularly informative especially for me who, far from being an expert of media, am a great consumer of media.