

**OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING**  
**Warsaw, 26 September – 7 October 2011**

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**Monday, 26 September 2011**

**Ms. Karine Soudjian**  
**Head of Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues Division**  
**Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia**

**Working session 1: Fundamental freedoms I, including:**

**Freedom of expression, free media and information**

Mr. Moderator,

Freedom, independence and pluralism of media are of great importance in the context of ensuring the realization of the constitutional right of persons to have access to information. My Government paid special attention to ensuring this fundamental freedom throughout legislative reform that has been carried out since Armenia's independence. As a result of the amendments in 2005, Article 83.2 was added to the Constitution of Armenia which stipulates that in order to ensure freedom, independence and diversity of broadcast media, an independent regulatory body shall be established by law. This was followed with the adoption, by the National Assembly of Armenia, of the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On Television and Radio".

In recent years, Armenia has been undertaking steps to switch TV broadcasting from analogue to digital. In October 2010, a working group was created under the auspices of the Human Rights Defender and with the involvement of relevant government agencies, civil society organizations and members of the Public Council, which works on amendments to the Law "On Television and Radio". The package of recommendations has been already prepared and sent to the National Assembly. Another important step forward has been taken in 2010: Armenia decriminalized defamation.

In the context of all these legislative changes, the training of judges and lawyers, more specifically their familiarization with and implementation of relevant international standards pertaining to freedom of expression and free media, is of utmost importance. Armenian judicial authorities are ready to cooperate with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media on this matter.

Mr. Moderator,

Today, the Internet brings people closer to each other and creates opportunities not only for obtaining a wide range of information, but also exchanging new ideas, and sharing experience and good practices in various domains. The development of Internet and innovative technologies has become one of the strategic priorities of my Government.

The issue of accessibility of Internet in Armenia is regulated by the Law “On Electronic Communications”, the main objective of which is “to promote the development of electronic communications on the territory of the Republic of Armenia, to ensure fair and open competition in the provision of electronic communications, and to protect the interests of the users of electronic communications services, operators and providers under an open market economy”.

According to the Presidential Decree issued in 2001, a special Council was established with the aim to promote progress of information technologies. The Council is headed by the Prime-Minister of Armenia.

Mr. Moderator,

Electronic mass media provide us with the opportunity not only to receive information rapidly, but to receive the whole palette of different public opinions. Undoubtedly, it is one of the greatest achievements of humanity. In the meantime, as it was acknowledged at the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Promotion of Pluralism in the New Media, regrettably, the new information technologies are also used for the dissemination of certain types of information which may have unpredictable or dangerous consequences for the recipients. Child pornography, trafficking, calls for terrorism, violence, militaristic and hate propaganda are among such challenges.

We all know and have witnessed how dangerous mass media can be, when it is abused to spread propaganda of hate and violence, particularly in conflict or post-conflict areas. That is why we believe that the OSCE should pay closer attention to the prevention of such hate speech through electronic and other media. Such attention would contribute to the strengthening of the main principles of the Organization, and would reinstate that the dissemination of hatred by means of mass media, including electronic media, is inadmissible and – as it was stated in 1994 in Budapest – “fomenting hatred and ethnic tension through the media, especially by governments, can serve as an early warning of conflict” (Budapest 1994: Decisions).

Mr. Moderator,

Finally I would like to thank the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mrs. Dunja Mijatović, and her office for the ongoing co-operation and expertise made available to my country at this very important period of consolidation of the policy and practice in the field of freedom of expression and media.

Thank you.