



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Representative on Freedom of the Media
Harlem Désir**

9 November 2017

Regular Report to the Permanent Council *for the period from 18 July 2017 to 9 November 2017*

Introduction

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to present to you my first report to the Permanent Council.

Almost exactly twenty years ago, the OSCE participating States created the Mandate of the Representative on Freedom of the Media. It is the only intergovernmental media freedom institution, and we can all be proud of its existence and of the media freedom commitments you agreed to defend through the Mandate I have the honour of fulfilling.

I am very aware of the legacy that I seek to carry forward, following in the footsteps of my predecessors: Freimut Duve, Miklós Haraszti and Dunja Mijatović.

Since the creation of this Office, many participating States have strengthened their legal framework to protect media freedom and seized opportunities offered by the digital media landscape to increase access to information, and developed a media environment rich in diversity.

But at the same time, a heavy cloud hangs over this anniversary. In many ways, media freedom is now under greater threat than at any time since the establishment of the Office.

When you look at this first report to the Permanent Council, you will note that since my appointment, I have intervened on average nearly once a day on issues taking place throughout the OSCE region – a total of 109 interventions in 31 OSCE participating States.

It is clear from this report, that several areas need our attention but also that the number one issue on my agenda is **safety of journalists. It is my first priority.**

Most of the interventions on safety addressed two basic, yet crucial, conditions for free media: the physical safety of journalists and the protection of their right to work freely.

The interventions include cases in which a journalist was severely threatened or physically attacked, or cases of vandalism of property belonging to media outlets, not to mention the countless online threats against journalists which have become a daily reality.

In this context, I would mention the specific trend of threats against and harassment of female journalists who face what is called a double-burden: being attacked both as a journalist and as a woman. The threats they receive are appalling, both in quantity and for their explicit nature. My Office will continue its project on Online Safety of Female Journalists into 2018, in order to bring much needed attention to this trend, as a serious threat to plurality and freedom of expression in the OSCE region and beyond.

There is no such thing as an insignificant threat against journalists.

Just a few days ago, the staff of Charlie Hebdo, the satirical magazine, received new death threats. We know the price they have paid for freedom of expression and we value their courage to refuse to give in to fanaticism. Protecting their freedom and security in the face of extremism and terrorism, is protecting our own liberty.

In the very short period since I took this Office there have been no fewer than four murders of journalists: Kim Wall in Denmark, Oruba and Halla Barakat in Turkey, and Daphne Caruana Galizia assassinated in Malta. They are very different cases in different contexts, but they all highlight the level of risk and the vulnerability of those who take on the task of providing us with information.

The murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia on 16 October has been a shock in Malta and far beyond. She was renowned for her investigations into corruption and received countless threats for her work. Last Friday, in Malta, I paid tribute to her memory and called for a full, transparent and independent investigation into her assassination.

Impunity is a crucial obstacle to journalists' safety and is a second crime against journalists. Ensuring the safety of journalists requires ruthlessly investigating each and every death, making sure that impunity has no place in the OSCE region. Indeed my very first public statement was on the assassination of journalist Pavel Sheremet one year ago in Ukraine. His killers have yet to be brought to justice.

Impunity also refers to allowing an atmosphere in which journalists are regularly insulted or abused, putting their safety at greater risk.

My interventions on the protection of journalists also concerned their physical freedom. I intervened more than twice a week during these four months on cases of journalists being imprisoned or detained for nothing more than doing their work. Today, more than 170 journalists are currently in detention throughout the OSCE region, though concentrated in a few countries. I will relentlessly call for their release.

And this leads me to my **second priority**. One of the main challenges we face is to ensure **the protection of media freedom in the new security context**. Too often, restrictions to media freedom and imprisonment of journalists are justified using security motives. Vague

and baseless accusations of support for terrorism are used to arrest and prosecute journalists. At a time when we need strong cohesion and consensus in our societies to confront terrorism we must ensure that our fundamental freedoms are not eroded in this process. And we should rely more on the comprehensive approach of security of the OSCE where freedom of the media is recognized as an integral part of our common security. We addressed this issue in depth during the most recent Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting organized by ODIHR and the Chairmanship on 2nd and 3rd November, which reaffirmed that human rights, freedom of the media and security have to go hand in hand at the OSCE.

Free media and free expression are indispensable allies in the fight against extremism: no society is strong if it has poor public debate, limited access to information and weak media. Access to the full diversity of opinions and sources of information contribute to a better informed society, help to address tensions, shine a spotlight on solutions and provide a framework of early warning when cohesion of society, democratic values and fundamental freedoms are at stake.

In a context of growing security concerns, it is crucial to ensure that legislation countering terrorism and hate speech, as well as internet regulation does not put freedom of expression at risk. Restrictions have to be the exception, clearly defined by law as strictly necessary and proportionate, in conformity with international obligations, and established through due process, under judiciary control and with an appeal mechanism. We want to work with each participating State on this issue as well as with internet intermediaries and social media platforms.

This ties in to **my third priority** which is to continue to engage governments and media professionals in the important issues of disinformation, “fake news,” propaganda and hate speech. This topic was high on the agenda at my meetings during several country visits including in Ukraine.

These trends affect trust and co-operation between and within nations, they endanger security. They also undermine confidence even in the most professional and well-established media. And I am particularly worried by disinformation when it is sponsored or propagated through state-run media or with the support of governments.

The consequences of disinformation and propaganda are clear; however the risks posed by restrictions on media are also important. I intervened several times on the issue of accreditation in several participating States. I recalled that in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, participating States committed themselves to enabling journalists to travel and work freely throughout the OSCE region. My Office has been working hard to develop clear guidelines and recommendations for participating States. In early 2018, I will publish a non-paper that will provide options for policy mechanisms to address disinformation and propaganda in line with OSCE commitments and international standards for media freedom and freedom of expression.

My fourth priority is to promote media pluralism in the OSCE region through the dissemination of best policy practices in the increasingly digital media landscape. That was

among the issues addressed at the recent Central Asia Media Conference my Office organized in Tashkent on the 18th and 19th of October, with the support of the government of Uzbekistan.

This topic concerns all participating States. Technology has brought about revolutionary changes to the media and to the profession of journalism. Today the fierce competition for advertising and readership has rendered social media and internet intermediaries as the clear winners, resulting in unprecedented economic pressure and cuts to the budgets and staff of editorial offices and the decline of traditional media.

These technological and economic trends also lead to a concentration in the hands of only a few companies which control access to information and editorial content for most citizens. Protecting diversity through net neutrality is a major challenge.

In this context, the role of public service media is even more important to ensure balance, quality and plurality in the media landscape. Public service broadcasters must remain financially sustainable and independent. These are issues on which we have and will continue to provide assistance and legal advice to participating States.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last July, you reaffirmed your strong support to the Mandate, and I am honoured to monitor and alert when necessary with respect to the commitments taken by participating States and to support and assist them with expert advice on legislation and policies.

Our Office has provided several legal reviews in the last four months at the request of the authorities or on our own initiative regarding legislation in Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

We continue to facilitate dialogue between journalists from the Russian Federation and Ukraine, on common needs of safety, protection and freedom.

We facilitate a dialogue in Cyprus, between journalists of both communities, who want to work on quality journalism and on a shared responsibility for the future of the island.

I visited several states - Georgia, Armenia, Cyprus, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, and Malta - and I thank the authorities and ambassadors for facilitating these visits which are of great value for our work.

We work closely with our civil society and international partners and I met with the main international media freedom NGOs in Brussels, together with UN media freedom rapporteur David Kaye.

I am very proud of the work of the Office and my team who uphold my role as mandate-holder, monitoring issues in all 57 participating States, and analysing the latest media developments on a daily basis. I thank them for their hard work and dedication.

We stand ready to assist your governments with expertise to strengthen media freedom, to improve safety of journalists, and to analyse draft legislation. We welcome and encourage the continuous dialogue with your delegations as essential for identifying your needs and maintaining our cooperation.

I very much look forward to continue our discussions, to benefit from your insights and to take all your suggestions into account on how we can better defend media freedom throughout the OSCE region.

Thank you very much.

Issues raised with participating States

Armenia

On **4-6 October** I paid an official visit to Armenia where I met with Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian, Justice Minister Davit Harutyunyan, Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman) Arman Tatoyan, Head of the Police Headquarters Hovhannes Kocharyan, and the executive management of the Public Service Broadcaster. The visit provided an excellent opportunity to receive, first hand, information on media freedom issues in Armenia and to discuss areas where my Office can best provide assistance in the future.

During the meetings I emphasized the need to ensure safe working conditions for journalists in Armenia and referred to cases of obstruction of the professional activities of media workers in recent years, especially those that occurred at or during public events. I also expressed my concern about the planned amendments to the country's Freedom of Information Law, stressing that limiting citizens' existing right to access to information must be avoided. I offered my Office's assistance in addressing both of these important issues and to provide expertise through the launch of a training course for journalists and representatives from law enforcement and media NGOs to increase stakeholder cooperation to improve media freedom throughout the country.

I also met with journalists and representatives of non-governmental organizations to hear their perspectives on the media freedom situation in the country and to discuss various issues, including the work of public service media and the proliferation of propaganda.

Azerbaijan

On 14 June Fikret Faramazoglu, Editor of the Jam.az news website, was sentenced by a district court in Baku for 7 years on charges of extortion (see Reports to Permanent Council of 1 December 2016 and 9 March 2017).

On 20 July I noted reports that blogger Alexander Lapshin, who was detained in Minsk in December 2017 and then extradited to Azerbaijan, was sentenced to three years in prison by the court in Baku on charges of illegal crossing of border (See Report to Permanent Council of 9 March 2017).

Later, on **11 September**, Lapshin was pardoned by President Ilham Aliyev, which I welcomed via my official Twitter account. Lapshin then left the country.

On 24 July I noted reports that Faig Amirov, Financial Director of the Azadliq newspaper, was sentenced to three years and three months in prison and fined by the court in Baku on charges of inciting religious hatred and tax evasion (See Reports to Permanent Council of 1 December 2016 and 9 March 2017). Later, in September, Amirov's prison sentence was converted to a conditional sentence by the appeals court.

On **17 August** I wrote to the authorities expressing concern about the launch of a criminal investigation against the independent news agency Turan on charges of tax evasion. Reportedly, Turan was accused of failing to pay taxes amounting to 37,000 manats (approx. 18,600 euros) from 2014-2016. During the course of the investigation, representatives from the Tax Ministry inspected Turan's office and confiscated its financial documents. The news agency denied all allegations of wrong-doing and claimed that the charges were unsubstantiated. Turan also claimed that it had already been subject to an official audit earlier in 2017 during which time the Tax Ministry did not find any irregularities. I urged authorities to carefully review the charges they brought against Turan and refrain from any measure that could impede the work of the news agency which contributes to media pluralism in the country.

On **25 August**, following the arrest of Director of the news agency Turan, Mehman Aliyev, and court-prescribed three month pre-trial detention on economic-related charges, I issued a public statement calling for his immediate release, stating that there was no need to keep a journalist in detention during the course of an investigation, or to block the activities of the news agency.

On 29 August I noted that the court in Baku had extended the pre-trial detention of Aziz Orudjev, Head of internet TV channel *Kanal 13*, for an additional three months.

Orudjev was reportedly arrested and sentenced to 30 days of administrative imprisonment for disobeying police on 2 May in Baku (see Informal Briefing of 20 May 2017). Later, on 1 June a district court ordered Orudjev's arrest for four months on new charges of illegal entrepreneurship and abuse of power. According to Orudjev's defence lawyer, the prosecution has not submitted any evidence of the journalist's guilt to the court.

On **11 September** I issued a public statement welcoming the release of Mehman Aliyev. The district court in Baku decided to release Aliyev and, reportedly, placed him under police supervision while under investigation. I also reiterated my hope that news agency Turan would shortly be allowed to continue its work and contribute to media pluralism in the country.

On **2 November** I welcomed the decision by Azerbaijan's authorities to drop criminal charges against Mehman Aliyev and the news agency Turan. According to reports, the charges were dropped by the Prosecutor General's Office that day. The decision also lifted a travel ban imposed on Aliyev. I also reiterated the readiness of my Office to engage in addressing other media freedom issues in the country.

Belarus

On **30 August** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Makei conveying my concern regarding the situation of freelance journalists in Belarus who continue to face prosecution for working with foreign media without state-approved accreditation. I noted that at least 30 administrative fines have been imposed on freelancers in 2017 alone, and on 24-25 August, courts fined freelance journalists Stanislau Ivashkevich in Lida, and Ales Silich, Maryya Artsybashava, Katsyaryna Andreyeva and Syarhey Kavalyou in Minsk. I called on authorities to refrain from imposing unnecessary limitations on the work of foreign journalists which affect the free flow of information and violate the OSCE commitments on freedom of the media. My Office stands ready to assist Belarus in facilitating a dialogue and coordinating joint efforts with media organizations and the Government on this issue.

On 17 October I received an official reply noting that foreign journalists are prohibited from professional activities within the territory of Belarus without accreditation.

Bulgaria

On 6 October Member of Parliament Anton Todorov (Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria, GERB) and the Deputy Prime Minister, Valeri Simeonov, suggested that journalist Viktor Nikolayev might lose his job following his questions during a show on NOVA TV.

On **13 October** I issued a public statement expressing concern regarding Nikolayev's case, calling on authorities to protect the right of journalists to carry out their work without political pressure.

Canada

On **6 October** I issued a press statement welcoming Canada's new Journalistic Source Protection Act, known as Bill S-231, which was passed on Wednesday 4 October. The new "press shield" law protects the right of a journalist to refuse to disclose information that identifies or is likely to uncover their source who has requested to remain anonymous.

Croatia

On **19 September**, in a letter to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Marija Pejčinović Burić, I raised a number of issues that took place in Croatia in recent months:

- On 2 August unknown persons broke into the apartment of investigative journalist Domagoj Margetić in Zagreb.
- On 23 August Croatian Radiotelevision and SBplus portal journalists Višnja Ružojčić and Aleksandra Primorac were victims of a physical and verbal attack by an unknown person in Slavonski Brod.
- On 16 September Nova TV journalist Ema Branica, camera operator Alan Novak and his assistant Goran Jaganjac were physically attacked in Veliki Pašijan.
- Željko Peratović, a well-known investigative journalist, received several threats on social media related to his work on sensitive topics.

On **11 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I joined the Croatian Association of Journalists (HND) in condemning the physical attack against journalist Drago Miljuš in Split. I also called on the authorities to conduct a swift investigation.

On **13 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the positive step taken by Croatian authorities to take action against police officers accused of assaulting journalists.

On **30 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I condemned the death threat sent to journalist Maja Sever and called for swift investigation. I noted that online harassment and threats must be taken seriously.

On 1 November I received a reply from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Marija Pejčinović Burić regarding the cases I raised in my letter of 19 September:

- Regarding the case of the attack on the TV journalist, the Court has ordered a month of detention for the primary perpetrator.
- Regarding the verbal attack on Croatian Radiotelevision and SBplus portal journalists, one person has been charged with a petty offense.
- Regarding the case of the breaking into the apartment of journalist Domagoj Margetić, it is currently being processed by the police. In addition, regarding the criminal offense of the threat levied against journalist Margetić, the Municipal State Attorney's Office in Zagreb is collecting evidence.
- Regarding the verbal attacks against journalist Željko Peratović, the police report and other available information has been sent to the Municipal State Attorney's Office for further proceedings.

Cyprus

On **10 October** I paid an official visit to Cyprus where I launched an exchange project for young journalists from the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities as part of my Office's "Cyprus Dialogue" project, initiated in March this year.

At a meeting with the 14 young journalists who will participate in the week-long exchange, I expressed trust that this experience would allow them to increase understanding among readers and viewers from both communities about life in their respective communities, and widen their professional network.

I also met with the heads of Journalist Unions, the heads of Press Councils, as well as journalists, bloggers and other representatives of civil society to discuss current issues affecting media freedom, freedom of expression and quality journalism. Together, we have launched the development of a glossary of sensitive words used by the media, and recommendations for possible alternatives. A draft of the glossary will be presented early next year.

(see "Cyprus Dialogue" under Projects and Activities)

During the visit I also met with the President of the House of Representatives Demetris Syllouris, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Alexandros Zenon, and Deputy Government Spokesperson Victor Papadopoulos, to discuss media freedom developments in the country. I welcomed the support offered by the authorities to my Office throughout the course of this project and offered the full assistance of my Office to civil society including the journalist community and country authorities in their efforts to strengthen quality journalism on the island. I trust that the “Cyprus Dialogue” will continue to play an imperative role in these efforts.

Denmark

On **25 August** I issued a public statement on the death of the Swedish freelance journalist Kim Wall who was killed on assignment. I welcomed the swift investigation by Danish authorities and said that her death is a tragic reminder of the threats that journalists face today. I also noted that female journalists are particularly vulnerable to attack and violence.

Estonia

On **30 August** I wrote a letter to Foreign Minister Sven Mikser regarding denial of accreditation for three requests for journalists to cover the informal meeting of the EU ministers of Foreign Affairs (Gymnich), on 7-8 September in Tallinn. Reportedly, the Estonian Presidency of the Council of the European Union denied accreditation for one Brussels-based correspondent and two Moscow-based correspondents from the State-owned Rossiya Segodnya. I recalled OSCE commitments regarding accreditation of journalists.

France

On **23 October**, in a letter to the French authorities, I requested additional information and clarification following reports that a correspondent of the Russian news channel Sputnik had been denied access to a press conference by the President of France and the Prime Minister of Iraq. I highlighted the responsibility of participating States to facilitate the work of journalists from other participating States and free flow of information.

On 6 November I received a reply from the authorities informing me that foreign journalists who hold a correspondents’ card issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and French journalists who have a press card do not have automatic access to all press conferences.

The press conferences organized by the President of the Republic and Ministry of Foreign Affairs are open to journalists upon invitation and that a number of foreign, including Russian journalists are regularly invited.

Georgia

On **3-4 October** I paid an official visit to Georgia where I met with Foreign Minister Mikheil Janelidze, First Deputy Chairperson of the Parliament Tamar Chugoshvili, the Public Defender (Ombudsman) Ucha Nanuashvili and representatives of media and civil society organizations.

During the course of discussions, I welcomed amendments to the Constitution, recently adopted by the Parliament, which will grant citizens the right to access and freely use the

internet. The amendments also enhance the right to access information and the independence of the public service broadcaster.

I discussed ongoing efforts to reform the Public Broadcaster, including the change of programmes, and to amend the existing legislation. I emphasized that these reforms must be carried out in a transparent and inclusive manner, so as not to jeopardize the independence or accountability of the public broadcaster.

I noted the ongoing process regarding the ownership of the private television channel Rustavi 2 in the European Court of Human Rights and reiterated the need for the channel to enjoy editorial independence to be able to fulfil its professional activities in the interest of the Georgian public.

I also discussed the comments, commissioned by my Office, on the initiative of the Prime Minister of Georgia to establish an Office of the Media Ombudsman and expressed readiness to continue consultations with the authorities on the issue.

I also emphasized the need to ensure the safety of journalists and raised, in particular, the case of Afgan Mukhtarli, an independent journalist from Azerbaijan, who was abducted in Tbilisi in May 2017 and has since been held in detention in Azerbaijan. I urged authorities to quickly finalize investigation in a transparent manner. I also met with the journalist's wife, Leyla Mustafayeva, in Tbilisi.

Germany

On **4 October** I issued a public statement on the Law on Better Law Enforcement in Social Networks (NEA), highlighting the potential chilling effect the law might have on freedom of expression. I also commended the innovative compliance system introduced in the law.

Hungary

On 6 September the Association of Hungarian Journalists (MUOSZ) released a statement claiming that 888.hu had published a list of 12 journalists said to be foreign agents.

On **8 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I noted that such a list threatens the safety of journalists, and expressed my support for the statement released by MUOSZ.

Ireland

On **2 October** I sent a letter to the Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar and issued a press statement welcoming the decision of the Irish government to initiate a constitutional referendum to abolish blasphemy.

Italy

On **5 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I joined journalists Associations in Italy in condemnation of an act of vandalism against the newspaper Settegiorni in Rho.

Kazakhstan

On **7 September**, in a public statement, I welcomed the release of Zhanbolat Mamay, acting Chief Editor of the newspaper Sayasi Kalam Tribuna, but voiced concern about the imposition of a ban from journalism placed on Mamay. The former Representative previously addressed Mamay's arrest with the authorities (see Regular Report to the Permanent Council of 9 March 2017).

On **22 September** I wrote to the authorities to present a legal review of the draft law On Amendments and Addenda to Some Legal Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Issues of Information and Communications.

(See legal reviews)

Kyrgyzstan

On **22 August** I received a reply from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to a letter sent in January 2017 by the Representative on Freedom of the Media. The Ministry provided the updated list of Kyrgyz journalists who were killed while performing their professional activities since 1992 as well as updated information on the investigation of criminal cases.

On the same day I received a non-paper compiled by the authorities regarding journalist Ulugbek Babakulov. The non-paper provided information on the criminal investigation launched against the journalist based, according to the non-paper, on his article published on the Fergana.ru portal in May.

On **28 August** I wrote to the authorities expressing concern about the closure of the independent television channel "September" in Kyrgyzstan on charges of allegedly broadcasting extremist content.

On the same day, I wrote to the authorities to present legal commentary on the law "On Guarantees of Activities of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic".

(See legal reviews)

On **22 September** I wrote to Foreign Minister Erlan Abdyldaev expressing my concern about the indictment of the Kyrgyz journalist Zulpakar Sapanov. On 12 September the journalist was sentenced to four years in a penal colony for publication of his book "Kydyr Sanjirasy".

I also expressed concern about a law suit filed by a prospective presidential candidate, Sooronbai Jeenbekov, against the online publication 24.kg and journalist Kabay Karabekov. The law suit seeks damages in the amount of five million Soms (approx. 61,166 EUR) from the publication and journalist respectively.

On 13 October I received a reply from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to my letter of 22 September 2017. The Ministry replied that on 30 September the Bishkek city court judicial board changed the penalty of the sentence against Zulpakar Sapanov to two years on parole and released him.

On **17 October** I issued a public statement condemning an assault on journalists in Osh, Kyrgyzstan at a polling station during the presidential election. On 15 October a camera operator from the NTS TV station in Osh, Mirbek Aitikeev, was physically assaulted by unidentified persons who also took away his mobile phone. Two journalists from AKI Press

also had their equipment confiscated, but managed to recover it. Additionally, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty correspondent Sanjar Eraliev and a colleague, Ydyrys Isakov, were verbally abused and threatened upon arrival at another precinct.

On **17 October** I wrote to the authorities to present legal commentary on the law on certain provisions Constitutional Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On the Elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and Parliamentarians to the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic”.

(See legal reviews)

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

On **12 October** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikola Dimitrov and Minister of Information Society and Administration Damjan Mancevski presenting a legal review of the draft law amending the Law on Audio and Audio-visual Media Services.

(See legal reviews)

Malta

On **16 October** I made a public statement expressing immense shock over the death of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, who was well known for her investigative reporting on corruption cases, and urged the Maltese authorities to ensure that the investigation was swift and transparent. She died on 16 October, right after leaving her home, when her rented vehicle exploded.

I noted that the journalist filed a police report two weeks earlier, saying that she was being threatened. I reiterated my Office’s statement, in February, calling on Malta to protect critical journalists from threats and intimidation.

I noted that the authorities, including Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, immediately and publicly condemned the attack. I spoke with the Prime Minister and indicated that I would follow the investigation closely, in coordination with the authorities.

On **3 November** I travelled to Malta to attend the funeral of Daphne Caruana Galizia. I also met with Prime Minister Joseph Muscat and other government representatives. I issued a public statement that such a barbaric act must not remain unpunished and urged the authorities to use all available means to initiate a full, transparent and independent investigation into the killing of the journalist.

Moldova

On **28 September** I wrote to authorities expressing concern about members of the Russian media being denied entry into Moldova.

On 27 September Daria Aslamova, a Komsomolskaya Pravda daily correspondent, was denied entry at the Chisinau airport. Earlier, on 1 September, entry was denied to the Editor of Argumenty i fakty weekly Igor Chernyak.

I called on authorities to reconsider the use of restrictive and selective measures in relation to media outlets affected by the entry ban and allow all journalists to pursue their professional activities.

On 2 October I received a reply from the authorities informing me that some representatives of the Russian mass media attempt to enter Moldova on business purposes without the necessary accreditation, as prescribed by the agreement between Moldova and the Russian Federation. As for Aslamova's case, the authorities said she was denied entry based on failure to provide information proving the nature of her visit as a tourist.

Montenegro

On **12 September** I issued a public statement condemning a death threat against Vladimir Otašević, a journalist with the Montenegrin newspaper Dan. Reportedly, on 11 September, in a telephone call, the journalists received a death threat alluding to the killing of the Dan newspaper editor Duško Jovanović in 2004. I urged the Montenegrin authorities to swiftly investigate the incident.

On 2 October Minister of Foreign Affairs Srđan Darmanović replied to my letter, informing me that the Montenegrin authorities – State Prosecutor's Office and other institutions reacted immediately and took all necessary steps to clarify and conduct a detailed investigation into the case from all perspectives, in order to avoid any possible dilemmas on the subject.

On **2 October**, in my reply, I thanked to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Srđan Darmanović for information on the case.

On **24 October** I met with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro Srđan Darmanović during the OSCE Mediterranean Conference in Palermo on a number of issues including media self-regulation, the public broadcasting system, safety of journalists, and cooperation with the Office of the RFoM.

Poland

On **3 August** I sent a letter to the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Witold Jan Waszczykowski, and issued a press statement expressing my concern regarding the decision by the Ministry of Defence to file a complaint against journalist Tomasz Piątek. I indicated that restraint must be shown in reacting to reports and publications with prosecutions in order to protect freedom of the media.

On 29 August 2017 I received a response from Poland's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Witold Jan Waszczykowski, indicating that the "Polish law provides for the enhanced protection of public officials, including the protection of their dignity, whenever they exercise their official duties" and the "Polish legislator obliged journalists to proceed with utmost care and honesty when collecting and utilising press materials, notably by ensuring that the acquired information is based on facts". It further stated that in the view of Antoni Macierewicz, the Minister of National Defence, by publishing his book, Tomasz Piątek may have discredited the Ministry of National Defence, which was the reason for his notification to the National Prosecutor's Office of "a suspected offence".

From **10-14 September** I attended the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw and had a number of bilateral meetings with several media NGOs, the Polish

Ombudsman Adam Bodnar, Polish journalist Tomasz Piatek, and visited the offices of the media outlet Gazeta Wyborcza.

Romania

On **23 October** I wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Teodor Melescanu and issued a public statement conveying my concern regarding a recent amendment to the Law on the Organisation and Functioning of the AGERPRES National News Agency that would weaken the independence of the Agency and its Director-General by making it possible to dismiss the Director-General during the course of his or her mandate if Parliament rejects an AGERPRES' annual report.

On 8 November I received an official reply from the Minister of Foreign Affairs noting that the proposed amendment does not envisage any change of statute of AGERPRES or its Director –General, but rather aims to ensure legal symmetry between the Parliamentary procedures of nomination and dismissal of the Director-General on professional grounds.

Russian Federation

On 8 June a district court in Kaliningrad sentenced one of the two attackers in the case of journalist Igor Rudnikov, the Editor and Founder of the Noviy Kolyosa newspaper, to 1.5 years in a penal colony-settlement. The journalist was attacked and hospitalized with multiple stab wounds on 17 March 2016 (see Report to the Permanent Council of 1 December 2016).

On **2 August** I wrote to authorities raising the case of Uzbek journalist Khudoberdi Nurmatov (also known as Ali Feruz), a contributing journalist to Novaya Gazeta.

Nurmatov, who is in the process of seeking asylum in the Russian Federation, was detained in Moscow on 1 August based on the administrative charge of violating residence regime. I asked the authorities to carefully consider this case, allow the journalist to remain in the Russian Federation until a final decision has been taken on his asylum status and all possibilities in accordance with the law have been exhausted and to not, in any case, deport the journalist to Uzbekistan. The district court ruled, later that day, to imprison and deport the journalist to Uzbekistan.

On 18 October I received an official reply that, given the intervention by the European Court of Human Rights', the deportation has been suspended. Nurmatov remains in detention in the Russian Federation.

On **10 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed dismay regarding the controversial court decision sentencing Alexander Sokolov, an investigative journalist with the RBC media group, to 3.5 years in a penal colony. I noted various reports alleging that the journalist could be the subject of persecution because of his reporting, which includes matters related to corruption (See Report to Permanent Council of 1 December 2016).

On **30 August** I replied to a letter from authorities on 28 August in which they expressed concern regarding the refusal by the Estonian Presidency of the Council of the European Union to grant accreditation to "Rossiya Segodnya" journalists.

On **21 September** I wrote to the authorities raising several incidents involving journalists and requesting information on actions taken by the authorities, including judicial authorities, regarding the situation and safety of the media workers in the following cases:

- I expressed concern about the case of Alexander Batmanov, a journalist and presenter from the online channel NGO-TV. Batmanov has been in pre-trial detention since June 24 of this year on charges of stealing food in a grocery store in Volgograd. He has been placed under arrest despite having two broken ankles. I noted reports indicating that the reason for Batmanov’s arrest was his work as a journalist, as he covered human rights and corruption issues involving local authorities. I urged the authorities to thoroughly investigate the charges brought against Batmanov to exclude interference into his professional activity as a journalist and grant him all necessary medical assistance and legal procedural privileges.
- On 28 July the car belonging to Victor Shaternikov, a blogger and contributor to the YouTube channel “So-Vesti” was set on fire with a “Molotov Cocktail” by unknown perpetrators in Novotroitskaya village in the Stavropol region.
- On 24 August Denis Korotkov, a reporter for Fontanka.ru news website, was subjected to online threats after publishing an article on the alleged engagement of Russian citizens in military operations in Syria. The news website was also subject to a Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack a few hours after the threats were made.
- On 29 August Alexey Ivanov, a journalist from Perviy Kanal, was beaten by unknown assailants while on duty in Yekaterinburg. The journalist was hospitalized with a broken nose and concussion.
- On 3 September the car of Yulia Latynina, journalist and contributor to Novaya Gazeta newspaper and Echo Moskvyy radio station, was set on fire next to her house in the Moscow suburbs, by unknown people. The incident follows an attack on 19 July 2017 when Latynina’s house was covered with liquid chemicals, and, as a result, several people including her parents and neighbors had to seek medical assistance. Earlier, on 20 August 2016, Latynina was attacked in Moscow and doused with fecal matter by an unidentified assailant (See Report to Permanent Council of 1 December 2016). I urged the authorities to investigate this and previous disturbing incidents involving Latynina to ensure the journalist’s safety. Reportedly, the journalist has decided to leave Russia as she is concerned for her and her relatives’ safety.

On 17 October I noted that the court in Volgograd found Batmanov guilty and handed down a prison sentence of two years and one month.

On 18 October I received an official reply regarding the cases raised in my letter of 21 September:

- In the case of Yulia Latynina, a criminal investigation has been launched with regards to the car fire carrying charges of “deliberate destruction of property”. There has been no investigation into the spreading of liquid chemicals after it was determined that no crime had taken place. The police registered the attack on the journalist in Moscow when she was doused with excrement.

- I was informed that a criminal investigation has been launched carrying charges of “deliberate destruction of property” in the case of Victor Shaternikov.
- A criminal investigation was also launched in the case of Alexey Ivanov carrying charges of “intentional infliction of slight damage to health with motives of hooliganism”.
- Finally, in the case of Denis Korotkov, it was determined that no crime took place.

On **28 September** I replied to a letter from authorities on 27 September in which they expressed concern regarding a denial of entry to Moldova for journalist Daria Aslamova, correspondent with the Komsomolskaya Pravda newspaper.

On **29 September** I issued a public statement condemning the firebombing of the Moscow offices of and threats against the Russian news website Lenta.ru. According to reports, two unidentified people entered the business centre that houses the editorial offices, vandalised the premises and threw a Molotov cocktail through a window. The fire was quickly extinguished.

On **7 October** I issued a public statement on the occasion of the 11th anniversary of the death of Novaya Gazeta journalist Anna Politkovskaya and called on the authorities to end impunity for crimes committed against journalists. Politkovskaya was shot and killed in Moscow on 7 October 2006 in the building where she lived. In June 2014 sentences were handed down to five individuals for the murder, however, the investigation was unable to name the masterminds of the crime.

On **23 October** I issued a public statement condemning an attack on Tatyana Felgenhauer, Deputy Editor and presenter at Echo Moskvyy radio station. According to reports, Felgenhauer was stabbed in the neck at the Ekho Moskvyy studio in central Moscow and taken to the hospital in critical condition. A criminal case has reportedly been launched on charges of attempted murder.

On 27 October, in a letter from the authorities, I was informed that the investigation into the attack on Echo Moskvyy radio station is under the control of law enforcement and the media community.

On **1 November**, in a letter to the authorities, I confirmed receipt of their official reply of 27 October.

On **3 November** I wrote to the authorities and issued a public statement expressing concern about the detention and physical condition of journalist Igor Rudnikov in Kaliningrad. According to reports, on 1 November, Rudnikov, the Editor and founder of the Noviy Kolyosa newspaper, was forcefully detained by representatives of the Russian Federal Security Service on charges of extortion in Kaliningrad. Additionally, the editorial office of the newspaper was searched. Some reports alleged that Rudnikov hospitalized with a broken arm and cerebral trauma. I noted that the Russian Union of Journalists expressed serious concern about the case. I called upon the authorities to release the journalist during the investigation. In March 2016 the journalist was attacked and received multiple stab wounds (see Regular Report to the Permanent Council of 1 December 2016).

Serbia

On **20 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I condemned the labeling of Sefan Dojčinović, editor of “KRIK” as a foreign agent by a political party as an unacceptable threat to his safety.

On **22 September** I wrote to the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dačić to express my concern regarding the following media related incidents in Serbia:

- On 31 May Lidija Valtner, journalist from the daily “Danas”, and her colleagues from the production company Insider, portals VICE and Espresso and Radio Belgrade were verbally and physically attacked while covering the inauguration ceremony of the new President of the Republic of Serbia.
- On 23 June Marija Vučić, journalist and Deputy Editor of Cenzolovka received a death threat on social media.
- On 7 July unknown persons broke into the apartment of Dragana Pećo, investigative journalist from the Network for Investigating Crime and Corruption (KRIK) in Belgrade.
- I welcomed the fact that, on 23 August, a criminal complaint was filed against a person responsible for online threats against Nedim Sejdinović, President of the Independent Journalists’ Association of Vojvodina.
- On 8 September journalists from the internet portal “Magločistač”, a local portal from Subotica, received a series of death threats.
- On 16 September, during protests in front of the TV Pink premises, journalists Gordana Uzelac and Mara Dragović were physically attacked. I welcomed the quick reaction by the police who have already detained the perpetrator and public condemnation by the President Aleksandar Vučić and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Internal Affairs Nebojša Stefanović.
- On the same day, in front of the Radio Television of Serbia (RTS), a journalist and camera operator were also subjected to physical attacks. I requested additional information about the status of the investigation on this case.
- On 18 September, on an official website of one of the political parties that is part of the governing coalition, Stevan Dojčinović, Chief Editor of the Network for Investigating Crime and Corruption (KRIK) is portrayed as a foreign mercenary who works against the interest of the state.
- I also expressed my concern about the hunger strike, which Vukašin Obradović, founder of the weekly “Vranjske novine” and former President of the Independent Journalists’ Association of Serbia began on 19 September.

Spain

On **28 September** I wrote a letter to the authorities regarding the entering of newsrooms and random checking of the identities of journalists by police forces as a result of a judicial ruling prohibiting advertisement of the referendum. I informed the authorities that this could be seen

as intimidation and excessive use of force and urged them to refrain from such action against the media in the future.

On **29 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the decision taken by Spain not to extradite Swedish-Turkish journalist Hamza Yalçın to Turkey.

On **13 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed Spain's decision not to extradite Doğan Akhanlı, a German journalist of Turkish origin.

Both journalists have been critical of the current government in Turkey and had been detained by Spanish law enforcement authorities following an Interpol 'red notice' alert request by Turkey. I also sent a letter to Interpol regarding the 'red notice' alert requests.

(See International Organizations under Issues raised with participating States)

Turkey

On **24 July**, in a public statement, I emphasized that the start of the trial against journalists and board members of the daily newspaper Cumhuriyet highlighted the urgent need to protect journalism and improve media freedom in Turkey. I noted that I would closely follow the proceedings that started that day in Istanbul against 17 prominent journalists, editors and board members of the newspaper, including Can Dündar, Kadri Gürsel, Murat Sabuncu and Ahmet Şık.

I called on Turkey to drop the charges, release all journalists imprisoned for their work, and initiate policy reforms to protect media freedom in the country.

I expressed my intention to engage with the authorities in thorough policy and legal reforms to protect free expression and media freedom, and offered my Office's assistance in this process.

On **29 July**, following the interim court decision in the Cumhuriyet trial the previous day, I publicly reiterated my call to the Turkish authorities to drop charges and release all journalists in prison in the country. On 28 July, the Istanbul 27th Heavy Criminal Court ruled that Önder Çelik, Turhan Günay, Mustafa Kemal Güngör, Hakan Kara, Musa Kart, Güray Öz and Bülent Utku be released under judicial supervision pending trial, while Akın Atalay, Ahmet Kemal Aydoğdu, Kadri Gürsel, Murat Sabuncu and Ahmet Şık were returned to jail. The court also decided that additional criminal charges would be brought against Ahmet Şık for his defense statement.

On **2 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I called for the immediate release of French journalist Loup Bureau, who was arrested in Turkey. I stressed that journalists must be free to do their job.

On **4 August** I wrote to Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu expressing concern over a number of cases in Turkey:

- Regarding the arrest of French journalist Loup Bureau, I urged that the journalist be released without delay and all charges against him dropped. On 26 July, Bureau was detained in Turkey at the Habur Border Gate near the Silopi district of Şırnak. On 2

August, he was formally arrested and taken to the prison of Şırnak. According to media reports the evidence used against him was a 2013 report for the media outlet TV5Monde, on Kurdish militias in Syria. In the letter I emphasized that reporting on issues of public interest, including sensitive issues related to terrorism and conflict, is a core component of the work of journalists.

- I highlighted the case of German-Turkish journalist Deniz Yücel, raising my concern with regards to his arrest, the severity of the charges against him, and his placement in solitary confinement for more than 170 days.
- I recalled that the trial of German journalist Meşale Tolu, arrested on 30 April, would take place on 11 October, noting that she stands accused of membership in a terrorist organization and propaganda for terrorism, and faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted. I noted that since her husband is also under arrest, her two year old child is staying with the parents who facilitate visits to both prisons.

On **10 August**, in a public statement and statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed deep concern regarding the issuance of arrest warrants for 35 journalists from various news outlets in Istanbul, on charges of “being a member of a terrorist organization”. Nine of the journalists were detained, while 26 were subjected to home searches and criminal investigations.

On **18 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the release of two journalists, Cihan Acar and Bünyamin Köseli, and urged that all imprisoned journalists be released, including social media commentator Atilla Taş and freelance journalist Murat Aksoy.

On **24 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I raised the case of Meşale Tolu, a German journalist and mother who now raises her young child in prison, and urged for her release.

On **30 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I highlighted the case of Turkish author Aslı Erdoğan who was not allowed to travel to Germany due to a travel ban imposed on her. I emphasized that journalists should be able to move freely to carry out their work. She was later given authorization to travel to Germany.

On **5 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I noted that I followed media reports about Evrensen Daily journalist Kemal Özer, who was detained that day, his home having been searched and his equipment seized.

On **12 September** I issued a joint public statement with David Kaye, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, emphasizing the urgent need to restore media freedom and freedom of expression in Turkey. Our call followed the court decision the previous night, denying the release of imprisoned Cumhuriyet journalists and executives.

We urged Turkey to drop charges against the Cumhuriyet journalists and executives.

On **15 September** I publicly welcomed the court decision to release Loup Bureau from prison in Turkey, noting that the next step should be the dropping of all charges against the

French journalist. Bureau, a freelancer who has covered various conflicts and crises including in Crimea, Egypt, Iraq and Syria, was arrested in south-eastern Turkey on 26 July. He continues to face severe terrorism charges.

I recalled that Bureau was not the only foreign journalist in Turkey accused of serious charges, noting that I previously urged Turkey to release German-Turkish journalist Deniz Yücel, who has been held in a solitary cell since February 2017, and German journalist Meşale Tolu, imprisoned since April.

On **18 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I noted that I will follow the trial against 30 former Zaman journalists. I added that the risk of life in prison for journalism is unacceptable.

On the same day, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I emphasized that Şahin Alpay, one of the former Zaman journalists, is suffering from health problems in prison. I called for the release of all journalists imprisoned in the country.

On **19 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I noted that journalists Ahmet Altan, Mehmet Altan, Nazlı Ilıcak and their colleagues continue to face long imprisonment, and urged that freedom of expression must also be applied to dissenting views.

On **23 September**, in a public statement, I noted that the brutal killing of an American-Syrian journalist Halla Barakat and her mother Orouba Barakat in Istanbul, both reporting about the situation in Syria, highlighted the dangers that critical journalists face in their work. I expressed trust that the ongoing investigation by the Turkish authorities would quickly reveal both the perpetrators and the masterminds, who should face the full extent of the law.

They were found dead on 21 September in Istanbul where they lived. Turkish police launched an investigation, estimating that they were killed four or five days previous. Colleagues of Halla Barakat said that both victims had received death threats for their work via social media and email.

On **26 September** I welcomed the release of prominent journalist Kadri Gürsel, who spent almost a year in prison. I urged the Turkish authorities to use the momentum to free all Cumhuriyet journalists in prison and drop the charges against them without further delay.

The previous night, the Çağlayan Istanbul Courthouse ruled that Kadri Gürsel be released pending trial, but ordered the continued imprisonment of four of his colleagues, Akın Atalay, Emre İper, Murat Sabuncu and Ahmet Şık. Together with twelve other Cumhuriyet staff, the defendants continue to face up to 43 years in prison for various terrorism charges.

On **29 September** I wrote to Justice Minister Abdulhamit Gül, expressing my concern about recent developments in the ongoing investigation of journalist Can Dündar. According to media reports, the prosecutor in Diyarbakır started an investigation in response to a speech Dündar gave on 24 April 2016.

On **24 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the release of journalist Ömer Çelik. I also called for the release of journalists Tunca Öğreten and Mahir Kanaat and noted that professional reporting should never be treated as a crime.

On **25 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the release of Murat Aksoy and Atilla Taş and called for all charges against the journalists to be dropped.

On **31 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the release of former Özgür Gündem journalists İnan Kızılkaya and Kemal Sancılı. I added that putting journalists on trial for their professional activities damages media freedom.

On **31 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I commented on the on-going Cumhuriyet trial during which three prominent journalists and one staff member remain behind bars. I noted that imprisoning journalists on false charges is unacceptable, and urged the country to change course and protect media freedom.

On 1 November I received a reply from the authorities to my letter of 29 September, on the investigation in the case of journalist Can Dünder. The letter said that multiple arrest warrants were issued against the journalist for a number of ongoing investigations and prosecutions against him, including the case I raised in my letter. Initiated by the Prosecutor of Diyarbakir in response to a speech made by Dünder on 24 April, the investigation in question is based on Article 7/2 of the Anti-Terror Law, related to spreading propaganda for a terrorist organization. The letter noted that this and other cases are handled by the independent judiciary of Turkey, based on the rule of law, with the defendant having recourse to legal remedies, including the European Court of Human Rights.

Turkmenistan

On **1 August** I wrote to the authorities expressing my concern regarding the case of Soltan Achilova, a correspondent of Azatlyk Radiosy (RFE/RL Turkmen Service), who was reportedly harassed by unknown assailants while taking photographs during preparations for the Asian Games.

Ukraine

On 1 June the High Specialized Court for Civil and Criminal Cases overturned the acquittal of freelance journalist Ruslan Kotsaba. Earlier in July 2016 he was acquitted of charges of impeding the work of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (see Reports to the Permanent Council of 18 June 2015, 10 March 2016 and 1 December 2016).

On 7 June President Poroshenko signed a law on a mandatory 75 percent quota of Ukrainian-language content on television (see Report to the Permanent Council of 1 December 2016).

On 22 June Ihor Huzhva, the Editor-in-Chief of the website Strana.ua, was detained on suspicion of extortion. Reportedly, he demanded and received ten thousand dollars “for not posting compromising material on an active politician”. Huzhva rejected the accusations, saying that the criminal case was being "fabricated" to close down his website and put him in jail. On 27 June he was released on bail. Earlier in February, a number of journalists from Strana.ua were reportedly interrogated by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) (see Report to the Permanent Council of 9 March 2017).

On **20 July**, on the first anniversary of the murder of journalist Pavel Sheremet, I issued a public statement urging the authorities in Ukraine and other OSCE participating States to end impunity for murders of journalists. Sheremet, a journalist working for Radio Vesti and

Ukrainska Pravda, was killed in a car explosion on 20 July 2016 in Kyiv (See Report to Permanent Council of 1 December 2016).

On **28 July** I issued a public statement expressing concern about the continued detention of journalist Stanislav Aseev in eastern Ukraine and calling on all those responsible to immediately release him. Aseev, a contributor to the Ukrainian Service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) and a well-known blogger, disappeared at the beginning of June 2017 in Donetsk. Reportedly, he was detained by so-called “DPR” forces. During an OSCE conference in June 2017, the heads of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (NUJU) and the Russian Union of Journalists (RUJ) issued a joint statement expressing concern for Aseev.

On **4 August** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Pavlo Klimkin conveying concern regarding the case of a journalist and blogger, who was arrested by the SBU in Zhitomir on 2 August on various charges, including high treason, encroachment on territorial integrity, incitement of enmity and hatred and participation in a terrorist organization. According to various media reports, the journalist in question is Vasilii Muravitskiy, a regular contributor to various online media outlets. If convicted, the journalist may be sentenced to up to 15 years in prison. I asked the authorities to carefully review the serious charges brought against Muravitskiy, in full compliance with the principles of rule of law, necessity and proportionality, and with respect to the journalist’s right to freely express views and opinions.

On **10 August** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Pavlo Klimkin conveying concern about the case of the Strana.ua news website and its journalists:

- Regarding the 22 June detention of Huzhva and search of the website’s office, I noted a number of reports alleging that the developments around the media outlet could be retaliation for the critical nature of Strana.ua’s reporting, including with regard to high-level government officials. I called on the authorities to carefully review the serious charges repeatedly brought in relation to Strana.ua and its staff and refrain from any measures which could intimidate members of the media or impede the work of the news website.
- On 9 August the SBU searched Strana.ua’s office, as well as the apartments of journalists Veronika Kifichak and Kirill Malyshev and seized their personal equipment. Reportedly, the searches were sanctioned by the Pecherskiy district court of Kyiv, based on the charge of revealing state secrets.

On **14 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed full support for the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine in its effort to defend journalists and maintain open and meaningful dialogue with the Russian Union of Journalists. The tweet came in response to verbal attacks and harassment against the Union by one of the members of Parliament in an attempt to discredit the dialogue of professional organizations from two countries under the aegis of my Office.

On **16 August** I wrote to the authorities regarding the deportation from Ukraine of Tamara Nersesyan, a journalist with the Russian State Television and Radio Company (VGTRK). Nersesyan was detained by the SBU on 14 August in Kyiv and, after several hours of interrogation, she was forced to immediately leave and banned from entering the country for three years. In a similar situation, on 26 July, the SBU deported and banned entry for Maria

Knyazeva, a journalist also working for VGTRK. I encouraged the respective authorities to refrain from imposing unnecessary limitations on the work of foreign journalists which affect the free flow of information and freedom of the media.

On 30 August I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Pavlo Klimkin and issued a public statement regarding the practice of detention and expulsion of foreign journalists from Ukraine. On 30 August Anna Kurbatova, a journalist with the Russian Perviy Kanal, was detained by the SBU in Kyiv “for disgracing Ukraine” and later expelled from the country. On 25 August the SBU denied entry to two Spanish journalists, Antonio Pampliega and Manuel Ángel Sastre, and banned them from entering the country for three years. I called on authorities to refrain from imposing unnecessary limitations on the work of foreign journalists which affect the free flow of information and violate the OSCE commitments on freedom of the media.

On 10 October I learned from public reports that the SBU excluded the names of Spanish journalists from a list of people who are not allowed to enter the country.

On 5 October, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I noted that another Russian journalist, Vyacheslav Nemyshev with NTV television channel, was deported by the SBU from Ukraine. He was reportedly banned from entering the country for three years.

On 7 September I wrote to the Acting Minister of Information Policy of Ukraine Emine Dzhaparova in reply to her letter of 18 August requesting co-operation and assistance of my Office on regulation of hate speech issues in the media. I expressed readiness to work with the Ministry in better defining the respective policies, while allowing for adequate protection of free expression and free media. In particular, my Office will assist with research and information about relevant legislative and non-legislative practices in the OSCE region, and contribute to expert discussions by offering policy recommendations in line with international standards and OSCE commitments.

On 7 September I wrote to the authorities raising the issue of and requesting information about a number of incidents involving journalists in Ukraine.

According to reports, on 29 August Bogdan Novak, a journalist for the news website Vlasno.Info, was severely beaten by three unknown assailants while covering a public demonstration in Vinnitsa. Reportedly, the attack took place in the presence of law enforcement officers. Novak was taken to the hospital with a number of injuries.

On 25 August Roman Varshanidze, a journalist and editor from the Naddnistrianska Pravda web-newspaper, was severely beaten by three men on his way home in Ovidiopol, Odessa oblast. As a result of the attack, the journalist suffered a number of injuries.

On 18 August Yuri Jagolnik and Alexander Chernov, journalists from the online edition of NikLife and Shipovnik.ua at “Ukraine” television and Radio Company, were attacked by marketplace vendors while filming the inspection process of products on the market in Nikolaev.

On 30 July the car of Igor Rusin, the Editor-in-Chief of the Insider News website, was set on fire by unknown persons near his house in Kharkov. The journalist links the arson to his critical and investigative reporting on various local officials and criminals.

On 29 July three journalists with Zhytomyr oblast social and business newspaper “Ekho” and, “KP in Ukraine”, were attacked during the course of an investigation into the Radomyshl psychoneurological boarding facility.

I also requested details of the Office of the Prosecutor-General of Ukraine’s 2017 report regarding criminal proceedings in relation to crimes committed against media professionals.

On 27 October I received a reply from the authorities with information that investigations have been launched on all above-mentioned cases.

On 22 September I issued a public statement noting the release from house arrest of Mykola Semena, a journalist with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and condemning the conviction and imposition of a ban on “public activities”. I said that all charges against Semena should be dropped as they violate OSCE principles on freedom of expression and freedom of the media. Semena should also be able to travel freely. According to reports, Semena was sentenced to a 2.5-year suspended sentence for “public calls for actions violating the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation”, with a ban on “public activities” for a period of three years on 22 September in Simferopol, Ukraine (See Reports to the Permanent Council of 1 December 2016 and 9 March 2017).

On 3 October I wrote to the authorities to intervene on behalf of the Uzbek journalist Narzullo Akhunjonov who was detained at the Kyiv International Airport on 20 September. Reportedly, Akhunjonov was detained due to an Interpol warrant. I asked the authorities not to extradite Akhunjonov to Uzbekistan on humanitarian grounds, and to cooperate with the UNHCR to assist in ensuring his safety.

On 18 October I was informed that Akhunjonov was released.

On 17 October I wrote to authorities regarding the case of Fikret Huseynli, a contributing Dutch, Azerbaijan-born journalist to online channel Turan TV. Huseynli was detained at the airport in Kyiv on 14 October leaving the country based on the outstanding Interpol warrant issued by Azerbaijan. Huseynli has been accused of fraud and the illegal crossing of a border. I urged the authorities to carefully consider the case and not deport the journalist. I have noted concerns raised by several human rights and media organizations that, if expelled to Azerbaijan, Huseynli might face unfair treatment.

On 27 October I was informed that Huseynli was released on bail.

On 20 October I paid an official visit to Ukraine where I met with Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin and other senior governmental officials, including First Deputy Minister of Information Policy Emine Dzhamalova and Deputy Interior Minister Tatyana Kovalchuk. I also met with representatives from a number of civil society and media organizations to discuss media freedom issues in Ukraine. The visit provided an excellent opportunity to receive, first hand, information on media freedom issues in Ukraine and to discuss areas where my Office can best provide assistance in the future.

I urged the authorities to put an end to impunity for all attacks on journalists by effectively and promptly finalizing all open investigations and prosecuting instances of unwarranted interference. I ensured them that I will continue to closely follow the cases of Ukrainian journalists Roman Sushchenko, arrested in Moscow, Nikolay Semena, recently convicted in Crimea, Stanislav Aseev, detained in Donetsk, and developments around the Strana.ua news portal and its journalists. During the course of the visit, I also met with Roman Sushchenko’s

wife, Angela Sushchenko, to ensure her of my continued support regarding the journalist's release.

In addition, I raised concerns regarding the cases of journalists Narzullo Akhunjonov and Fikret Huseynli, recently detained in Ukraine following extradition requests by Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan, respectively. I asked the authorities not to extradite the two journalists as they might face unfair treatment and persecution for their critical reporting.

In my discussions with authorities, I further emphasized the need to respect the work of foreign reporters and other media actors by ensuring security, respect for freedom of expression and freedom of the media, and acting strictly in compliance with the principles of transparency, rule of law and due process.

I underlined the importance of maintaining a well-functioning public service broadcaster in Ukraine, including by ensuring sufficient funding.

I reiterated the readiness of my Office to continue the established dialogue with Ukraine and to support relevant processes for maintaining a diverse and pluralistic media landscape in the country.

On 25 October I issued a public statement condemning attacks by riot police on three journalists covering protests at a court house in Kyiv.

On 3 November I wrote to the authorities to raise the case of Zhanar Akhmetova, a blogger and contributor to several media outlets in Kazakhstan. According to reports, Akhmetova was detained near Kyiv on 21 October and later arrested for 18 days based on an outstanding Interpol warrant issued by Kazakhstan. I asked the authorities to carefully consider the case and not deport Akhmetova to Kazakhstan.

On 6 November I noted reports indicating that the district court in Kharkiv found four people guilty in the attack on the Kharkiv-based ATN television channel in April 2014 (see Report by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media "Media Freedom under siege in Ukraine" of 23 May 2014).

United States

On 27 July I wrote a letter to the United States' Chargé d'Affaires *ad interim* expressing my concern that law enforcement officers were reportedly forced to delete photographs and videos taken after protestors entered the chamber of the United States Senate to interrupt a procedural motion.

On 25 August I wrote a letter to Secretary of State H.E. Rex W. Tillerson and issued a press statement expressing deep concern about the recent remarks on media by the United States' President, Donald Trump, at a rally in Phoenix, Arizona, on 22 August and his previous declaration naming several media outlets as "enemy of the people". I urged all officials to refrain from delivering such attacks on the media and promote an enabling environment for media freedom.

On 5 September I issued a public statement condemning the shooting of Andy Grimm, a photographer for the Ohio-based New Carlisle News, who was shot and injured without

warning while taking weather-related photographs when a sheriff's deputy mistook his camera for a weapon.

On **27 September** I wrote a letter to United States' Chargé d'Affaires a.i. expressing my concern about the arrest and mistreatment by St Louis police officers of three media workers who were covering a protest in downtown St Louis on Sunday 17 September. I urged the authorities to undertake independent, impartial and thorough investigations into the allegations of physical assault and to drop all charges in connection with the individuals' legitimate journalist activities.

Uzbekistan

On **5 October** I issued a public statement welcoming the release of journalist Solidzhon Abdurakhmanov, a former correspondent with uznews.net and the UK-based Institute for War and Peace Reporting. I noted that his release follows the release of journalists Mukhammad Bekjanov and Djamshid Karimov earlier this year and appealed to the authorities to release those journalists still in detention.

On **16-19 October** I paid an official visit to Uzbekistan, the host country of the OSCE Central Asia Media Conference, which took place in **Tashkent** with the full cooperation of the authorities. The conference included the participation of representatives of government and civil society from every participating State in Central Asia.

During the visit I met with Sherzod Shermatov, Minister for Development of Information Technologies, and Ilkhom Abdullaev, Head of the Committee on Information and Communication Technologies of the Legislative Chamber of Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan. I also had a meeting with Sarvar Otamurodov, Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Chamber of Oliy Majlis. During the meetings I called for the release of journalists Yusuf Ruzimurodov, Dilmurod Saiid and Bobomurod Abdullaev. We also discussed reform of the media and communications environment in the country. The visit provided an excellent opportunity to receive, first hand, information on media freedom issues in Uzbekistan and to discuss areas where my Office can best provide assistance in the future.

International Organizations

Interpol

On **23 August**, in a public statement, I asked the international police organization, Interpol, to carefully review recent international arrest warrants requested by Turkey.

I welcomed Interpol's decision to suspend the red notice issued for the German writer of Turkish origin, Doğan Akhanlı, applying the rules of its Constitution that seek to protect individuals against persecution. I emphasized that Interpol must not be misused by any State to stifle freedom of expression.

I also raised the case of Swedish-Turkish journalist Hamza Yalçın, who was arrested by the Spanish authorities on 3 August 2017, based on an international arrest warrant requested by Turkey. I expressed hope that the arrest warrant for Yalçın would be suspended, and that the Spanish court would reach a conclusion soon. I also expressed the above-mentioned issues in a letter to the Secretary General of Interpol.

On 29 August I received a reply from Interpol's Director of Legal Affairs, assuring me that the General Secretariat of Interpol is fully committed to ensuring that notices published at the request of any member country comply with Interpol's rules, including Article 2 of the organization's constitution. The letter also noted that all Red Notice requests are reviewed by a dedicated Notices and Diffusions Task Force. In case new and relevant information is brought to the attention of the General Secretariat, the cases are re-examined. The letter stated that the OSCE could also play a role in encouraging its member countries to share information with Interpol which may be relevant in any such review process.

Annex

On 22 May the Office of the RFoM presented an informal briefing by the Officer-in-Charge of the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to the OSCE Chairmanship on the activities of the Office of the RFoM. The document can be found attached in the annex of this report. Listed below are responses received from participating States on media developments noted during the period covered by the informal briefing as well as responses to issues raised in previous statements by my predecessor Dunja Mijatović.

Albania

On 13 March, my Office received a reply regarding the attack against journalist Elvi Fundo raised in a statement by the previous RFoM.

The Albanian authorities, media and general public have strongly condemned the violent act against journalist Elvi Fundo. Prime Minister Edi Rama, Minister of Interior Sajmir Tahiri, the Union of Albanian Journalists and Audiovisual Media Authority have condemned the attack and have asked for a thorough investigation and have called for the perpetrators of the crime to be brought to justice. An investigation has already been launched.

Croatia

On 29 June the Permanent Mission of Croatia informed my Office of the response by authorities with regards to the cases of the assaults on journalists Siniša Vickov and Mladen Mirković:

- Regarding the case of the attack on Siniša Vickov, the Splitsko-Dalmatinska Police Administration submitted a special report on 20 April to the Municipal State Attorney's Office in Split. An additional report was submitted on 27 April regarding the case against two persons suspected of having committed the criminal offence of serious bodily injury from Article 118, paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code.
- Regarding the attack against Mladen Mirković, the Požeško-Slavonska Police Administration filed criminal charges on 24 May with the Municipal State Attorney's Office in Požega against a suspect believed to have committed the criminal offence.
- In relation to the threats of 13 May, the Zagrebačka Police Administration submitted a special report on 14 May to the Municipal State Attorney's Office in Zagreb who filed a motion before a judge at the County Court in Zagreb to order the pre-trial detention

of a suspect. At a hearing held on 15 May, the judge dismissed the motion for pre-trial detention and set the suspect free. However, the State Attorney's Office will continue to gather evidence.

Italy

On 29 June the Permanent Representative of Italy sent a reply regarding two cases noted in the informal briefing:

- Regarding the case of Gabriele Carchidi, Editor-in-Chief of the online newspaper iacchite.com who, on 10 May, was convicted and sentenced by a court in Cosenza (Calabrian region of southern Italy) to a total of 30 months in prison following four separate cases, the first judgment of the Court considered that the facts reported by the journalist were not supported by evidence and can still be appealed;
- Regarding the case of television journalist Luca Abete and his crew who, on 12 March, were physically attacked in Caserta by unknown assailants while filming a report on the sale of counterfeit items, the three attackers were identified and charged with aggravated robbery, injury and impairment.

Russian Federation

On 29 May authorities informed the Office of the RFoM that the police has been conducting verification activities into the case of Nikolay Andruschenko, journalist and co-founder of *Noviy Peterburg* newspaper

Projects and activities since the last report

Legal reviews

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

On **12 October** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikola Dimitrov and Minister of Information Society and Administration Damjan Mancevski following their request to provide a legal review of the draft law amending the Law on Audio and Audio-visual Media Services.

I welcomed the very active engagement of the Journalists' Associations, non-governmental and civil society organizations in public consultations regarding the draft Law, underlying the need for the process to remain open and transparent until its finalization.

I also underlined the importance of ensuring editorial and financial independence of the public broadcaster and the regulatory agency.

The analysis, prepared by Prof. Dr. Katrin Nyman- Metcalf, a renowned international expert in communications law, offered several recommendations.

Germany

On **19 May** the Office presented a legal review of the draft law On Better Law Enforcement in Social Networks (NEA) to the German authorities. The review was commissioned upon request of civil society and journalists' organisations to Professor Dr Bernd Holznagel of the Münster University and was presented at hearings in the German Federal Parliament (Bundestag).

Kazakhstan

On **22 September** I wrote to the authorities to present a legal review of the draft law On Amendments and Addenda to Some Legal Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Issues of Information and Communications. The review was carried out at the request of civil society and journalists' organizations and commissioned to Dmitri Golovanov, an expert on international media freedom standards and media law from the Russian Federation. The review focused on amendments relevant for freedom of the media and the right to access information from the perspective of international treaties, the Constitution of Kazakhstan and OSCE commitments.

Kyrgyzstan

On **28 August** I wrote to the authorities to present legal commentary on the law "On Guarantees of Activities of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic". The review was commissioned by my Office at the request of civil society and journalists' organizations in Kyrgyzstan. The legal commentary was commissioned to Dmitri Golovanov, an expert on international media freedom standards and media law from the Russian Federation.

The expert suggested a number of steps for national authorities in order to align legislative provisions with international legal standards.

On 13 October I received a reply to my letter of 28 August from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Commentary on certain provisions of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Guarantees of Activities of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic". The Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that there is not enough evidence that Articles 4 and 8 of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Guarantees of Activities of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic" do not comply with the principles of international law.

On **17 October** I wrote to the authorities to present legal commentary on the law on certain provisions on Constitutional Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On the Elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and Parliamentarians to the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic". The legal commentary was commissioned to Dmitri Golovanov, an expert on international media freedom standards and media law from the Russian Federation.

The commentary focused on the regulations of Internet publications during the election campaign with specific recommendations.

Ukraine

On **13 October** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Pavlo Klimkin presenting a legal analysis of the draft law "On Changes to Some Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Countering Threats to National Security in the Information Sphere". The legal analysis was carried out by Dr Joan Barata Mir, independent media freedom expert from Spain. The analysis reviews

critical provisions of the proposal to ensure that the law complies with the OSCE commitments and international standards and proposes a number of recommendations.

The amendments *inter alia* introduce a series of new principles and provisions on national security in Ukraine; grant new powers and competences to the Security Service of Ukraine, particularly in the area of blocking access to different kinds of online information services; reinforce the powers and competences of the National Commission for the State Regulation of Communications and Information as the telecommunications regulatory authority, which becomes the entity in charge of enforcing and implementing the decisions on blocking access to information resources; and, include a series of provisions aimed at establishing the specific mechanisms to block access to online information services in relation to criminal cases.

Publications

On **2 November** my Office published the 4th Edition of “Commitments and Taskings: Freedom of the Media, Freedom of Expression, Free Flow of Information (1975-2017)” in English and in Russian.

The publication is available at: <http://www.osce.org/fom/354081>

Visits and participation in events

On **23 March** my Office was invited by the European Parliament to speak at a meeting in **Brussels** of the Committee on Political Affairs, Human Rights and Democracy of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, on the situation of media freedom in the EU and Euronest region.

On **28 March** my Office participated in a UNESCO informational meeting in **Paris** “on a review of developments in the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine),” at the invitation of Director General Irina Bokova. My Office’s contributions to the discussion focused on the situation of free expression and free media.

On **29-31 March** my Office participated at RightsCon, an international event on human rights in the digital age, organised by Access Now in **Brussels**. The Office opened the event track related to ‘Fake News, Disinformation and Propaganda’ and spoke at a panel debate.

On **31 March, 15 September** and **27 October** my Office participated in public discussions in **Kharkiv, Mikolaiv** and **Ivano-Frankivsk** on ways to improve journalists’ professional standards and safety. The events were organized by the National Union of the Journalists of Ukraine with support from my Office and included the participation of a representative from the European Federation of Journalists.

On **20 April** my Office addressed the annual meeting of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine and on the following day took part in a panel discussion on safety of journalists in **Kyiv**.

On **25 April**, as part of the Cyprus Dialogue launched in March 2017, my Office led a meeting in **Nicosia** for 30 Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot journalists on ways to enhance cooperation and facilitated the adoption of a joint Memorandum of Understanding.

On **25 April** my Office participated at “Defining OHCHR’s Strategic Direction for 2018 – 2021”, organised by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (HCNM) in **Brussels**.

On **1-2 May**, upon official invitation from the authorities, my Office, together with the Chairman of the Lithuanian Journalists Union and independent media law expert Dainius Radzevičius, conducted a study visit to **Tbilisi** based on the initiative of the Prime Minister of Georgia to establish the Office of Media Ombudsman.

On **2-4 May** my Office participated at the annual World Press Freedom Day celebrations organised by UNESCO in **Jakarta**. My Office spoke at a panel debate on the Promotion and Protection of Journalists and a debate on “Fake News”.

On **10-11 May** my Office hosted the annual OSCE South Caucasus Media Conference in **Tbilisi** (see Conferences).

On **17 May** my Office participated at the Stockholm Internet Forum, taking part in a panel debate on the safety of female journalists.

On **17-20 May** my Office presented at the plenary of the 45th meeting of the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities, organized by Ofcom in **Edinburgh**.

On **18 May** my Office was invited to participate in the OSCE Security Days "Countering fragmentation and polarization: Re-creating a climate for stability in Europe," in **Prague**. My Office served as moderator of the "Night owl session – Distorted reality: Security implications of post-truth politics".

On **23-24 May** my Office spoke at a panel discussion on “Protecting Freedom of Expression when Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism on the Internet” at the 2017 OSCE-wide Counter-Terrorism Conference in **Vienna**. The event was co-organized by the delegations of Denmark, Sweden, United Kingdom and the Austrian Chairmanship.

On **23-24 May** my Office participated in the Central Asia Regional Heads of Field Operations meeting in **Tashkent**.

On **6 June** my Office was invited to **Sarajevo** by the High Representative to brief the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council on media reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On **8-9 June** my Office visited **Skopje** to discuss various media related issues with Journalists’ Associations, the Independent Trade Union, Council of Media Ethics and members of the international community.

On **12-13 June** my Office participated in and made a statement during the interactive Dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of expression at the 35th session of UN Human Rights Council in **Geneva**.

On **13-14 June** my Office participated in the international conference, “National Public Service Broadcasting in Bosnia and Herzegovina” in **Sarajevo**. The event was organized by my Office, together with the European Broadcasting Union, BHRT, the BH Journalists Association, the Council of Europe, BHRT, European Federation of Journalists and the South East Europe Media Organization.

From **26 June – 8 July** my Office participated in and gave a presentation at the 2017 Annenberg-Oxford Media Policy Summer Institute in **Oxford**, United Kingdom.

On **29 June** my Office participated in a panel discussion on conflict-sensitive journalism in times of crisis at the 3rd Donbas Media Forum “Donbas in Media: from Populism to Facts” in **Svyatohirsk**, Ukraine.

On **29 June** my Office participated in the workshop “Human Rights and civil society in Central Asia” organized by the EU Special Envoy to Central Asia Peter Burian in **Brussels**.

On **3 July** my Office participated in a panel discussion, “The Safety of Journalists – New Challenges and Responses”, organised by the Foreign Ministry of Lithuania, opened by Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius in **Vilnius**.

On **11 July** my Office participated at the OSCE Informal Ministerial meeting in **Mauerbach**, Austria.

On **14-18 July** my Office attended the Digital-born Media Carnival organized by Share Foundation, OSCE Mission to Serbia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and my Office in **Kotor**. My Office spoke at the high-level opening of the event and moderated and spoke at a panel on online safety of female journalists.

On **25 July** my Office participated in the Media Freedom Conference organized by the Qatari Human Rights Council in **Doha**.

On **5 September** I hosted a roundtable meeting with key civil society partners in **Brussels** including UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression David Kaye (see Conferences).

On **6 September** I attended a meeting with representatives from Reporters sans frontières in **Paris** on the safety of journalists, freedom of the media in the OSCE region and issues related to “fake news”, self-regulation and ethical journalism.

From **10-14 September** I attended the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in **Warsaw**, together with my team. In addition to addressing the plenary session during the opening and chairing Working session 1 “Fundamental freedoms I, including: Freedom of expression, free media and information”, I also spoke at several side events: “Ukraine: Safety of journalists and investigation of crimes against them” hosted by the Office of the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine, and “How to Free the Media in Turkey?” hosted by ARTICLE 19 and PEN International.

My Office also spoke at the following side events: “Tajikistan in Focus: Assault on Freedom of Expression, Retaliation against Relatives, and Worsening Political Crackdown” hosted by Human Rights Watch and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee; “Equality of opportunity - equal participation in political and public life” hosted by the United Kingdom Delegation to

the OSCE, and “Countering Violent Extremism and Securing Freedom of Expression Online: Possibilities and Limits” hosted by the OSCE Secretariat, the Action against Terrorism Unit, and my Office.

During my stay in Warsaw I also had bilateral meetings with several media NGOs, the Polish Ombudsman Adam Bodnar, Polish journalist Tomasz Piatek, and visited the offices of the media outlet Gazeta Wyborcza.

On **13 September** my Office chaired a side-event hosted by the delegation of the United Kingdom on “Equality of opportunity and equal participation in political and public life” at the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in **Warsaw**.

On **13 September** my Office participated in the 2nd Eastern Partnership Media Conference in **Kyiv**. The conference was organised by the European Commission with the support of the European External Action Service and the Government of Ukraine and brought together more than 300 participants from Partner countries and the European Union.

On **20 September** I spoke at the 83rd PEN International Congress in **Lviv**, hosted by Ukraine PEN in partnership with Lviv City Council and the Lviv UNESCO City of Literature Office. The event focused on the topic “Reclaiming Truth in Times of Propaganda”.

On **20 September** my Office participated at the Austrian Media Days organized by the Manstein Newspaper Publishing House in **Vienna**.

On **24-26 September**, my Office participated in the “Media Law Resource Center London Conference 2017” in **London** organized by the Media Law Resource Center. My Office participated, among other discussions, in a panel on Press Freedom in Eastern Europe.

On **26-29 September** my Office participated in the 13th International conference "Terrorism and Electronic Media" in **Sofia** organized by the International Academy of Television and Radio.

On **27 September** my Office participated in a session on joint multimedia projects by young journalists from Ukraine and Russia, in the context of the Dialogue between Ukrainian and Russian unions of journalists under the auspices of my Office, at the Russian Union of Journalists' 21st Festival of Journalists "All of Russia - 2017" in **Dagomys**.

On **29 September** my Office participated in a roundtable meeting in **Brussels** organised by Reporters sans frontières to discuss professional responses to “Fake News”, self-regulation and ethical journalism.

On **3-4 October** I paid an official visit to Georgia where I met with Foreign Minister Mikheil Janelidze, First Deputy Chairperson of the Parliament Tamar Chugoshvili, the Public Defender (Ombudsman) Ucha Nanuashvili and representatives of media and civil society organizations.

(See Georgia under Issues raised with participating States)

On **4-6 October** I paid an official visit to Armenia where I met with Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian, Justice Minister Davit Harutyunyan, Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman) Arman Tatoyan, Head of the Police Headquarters Hovhannes Kocharyan, and members of the

executive management of the Public Service Broadcaster, Margarita Grigoryan and Mark Grigoryan. I also met with journalists and representatives of non-governmental organizations to hear their perspectives on the media freedom situation in the country and to discuss various issues, including the work of public service media and the proliferation of propaganda.

(See Armenia under Issues raised with participating States)

On **5 October** my Office participated in the “VI International Conference: Russia and Europe: topical issues of contemporary international journalism” in **Budapest**. The conference was organized by International Life magazine (Moscow) with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications of the Russian Federation. The Office presented a report on “fake news” and freedom of the media.

On **5 October** my Office spoke at the opening of the European Media Freedom Conference organized by the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom in **Leipzig**.

On **6 October** my Office participated in a policy roundtable in **London** on “Addressing the Message and Protecting the Medium: How can governments most effectively address concerns about content and protect human rights?” organised by the Global Network Initiative.

On **9-11 October** I visited Cyprus with my team as part of the Office’s ongoing “Cyprus Dialogue” project. I launched an exchange project for young journalists from the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, the development of a glossary of sensitive words used by the media, and recommendations for possible alternatives.

(See Cyprus under Issues raised with participating States)

On **10 October** my Office participated in an international expert workshop “OSCE and Cyber: Institutionalizing Cyber as a cross-dimensional issue?” organized by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) in **Berlin**.

On **11 October** my Office participated in a Workshop on challenging hate speech and violent extremism online, organized by the OSCE Action against Terrorism Unit and Facebook in **Vienna**. The Office spoke on international standards on protecting freedom of expression and countering violent extremism: the implications for online content.

On **11 October** the Office participated in a workshop on the new HCNM Guidelines “National Minorities and the Media in the Digital Age” organized by the Office of the HCNM at the University of **Amsterdam**.

On **12 October** I gave an introductory address and my Office made a presentation at the 46th meeting of the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities conference in **Vienna**.

On **13 October** I was one of the opening speakers at a conference on the role and responsibilities of internet intermediaries in **Vienna** (see Conferences).

On **16-19 October** I paid an official visit to Uzbekistan, the host country of the OSCE Central Asia Media Conference, which took place in **Tashkent**. During the visit I met with

Sherzod Shermatov, Minister for Development of Information Technologies, Ilkhom Abdullaev, Head of the Committee on Information and Communication Technologies of the Legislative Chamber of Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Sarvar Otamuradov, Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Chamber of Oliy Majlis.

On **18 October** my Office spoke at the EU Council Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM) informal meeting in **Tartu**, Estonia.

On **20 October** I paid an official visit to Ukraine where I met with Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin and other senior governmental officials, including First Deputy Minister of Information Policy Emine Dzhamalova and Deputy Interior Minister Tatyana Kovalchuk. I also met with representatives of a number of civil society and media organizations to discuss media freedom issues in Ukraine and areas where my Office can provide assistance.

(See Ukraine under Issues raised with participating States)

On **23-24 October** my Office participated in a Workshop on countering extremism and the impact on civil liberties, organized by VOX-Pol (voxpole.eu) project in collaboration with the Berkman Klein Center, at Harvard Law School in **Cambridge, Massachusetts**.

On **23-25 October** I attended the 2017 OSCE Mediterranean Conference in **Palermo** on "Large Movements of Migrants and Refugees in the Mediterranean: challenges and opportunities." At the event, I gave a speech during the session "Successful integration, a common responsibility based on a two-fold approach: encouraging social inclusion of migrants and combating intolerance, racism, xenophobia, and discrimination, also based on religious grounds" on media-related components of immigration and integration.

On **24 October** my Office and the OSCE Mission to Montenegro organized a one day event on media self-regulation in Montenegro, held in **Vienna**.

On **24 October** I met with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro Srđan Darmanović during the OSCE Mediterranean Conference in **Palermo** on a number of issues including media self-regulation, professionalism, the public broadcasting system, implementation of ODIHR recommendations following the elections, and cooperation with the Office of the RFoM.

On **24-25 October** I participated in the OSCE Mediterranean Conference "Large Movements of Migrants and Refugees in the Mediterranean: Challenges and Opportunities" in **Palermo**. I gave an introductory speech about the role of the media in countering hate speech and disinformation, and the responsibility of governments and authorities to grant access to information to journalists on migrants and refugees.

On **25-27 October** my Office participated in the 17th International Aleksanteri Conference organized by the Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki, Finnish Centre of Excellence in Russian Studies "Choices of Russian Modernisation" and University of Tampere in **Helsinki**. The Office provided several presentations at the 17th Annual International Aleksanteri Conference "Russia's Choices for 2030" related to media and internet freedoms.

On **2-3 November** I spoke at the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Implementation Meeting on "The Role of the Free Media in the Comprehensive Approach to Security" in

Vienna, organized by the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), and supported by my Office.

On **3 November** my Office chaired a session on “Promoting the protection of human rights on the Internet” at the OSCE Austrian Chairmanship Conference “on Cyber Security” in **Vienna**.

On **3 November** I travelled to Malta to attend the funeral of renowned investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia. I also met with Prime Minister Joseph Muscat and other government representatives. I issued a public statement that such a barbaric act must not remain unpunished and urged the authorities to use all available means to initiate a full, transparent and independent investigation into the killing of the journalist.

On **6-7 November** I attended the Reinforced Ambassadorial Retreat organised by the OSCE Chairmanship in **Eisenstadt**, Austria.

Conferences

14th South Caucasus Media Conference

On **10-11 May** my Office held the 14th South Caucasus Media Conference in **Tbilisi** for more than 70 participants representing media, government, civil society and academia from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

The main topic of the conference was “fake news”, disinformation and freedom of the media, with sessions on challenges of disinformation and propaganda, media freedom in the digital age, approaches to counter disinformation and propaganda, and latest media freedom developments in the South Caucasus. Several international experts travelled to the region to share their experiences.

Participants adopted a set of recommendations on the challenges to free media and freedom of expression in the region and the best practices for improving professionalism and media freedom in the context of spreading “fake news”, disinformation and propaganda.

The list is available in English and Russian at: <http://www.osce.org/fom/318536>

Workshop for young journalist from Ukraine and Russia

On **11-20 June** my Office, together with the Russian Union of Journalists and the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, organized a media production workshop in **Vienna** for a group of young journalists from Ukraine and Russia. The activity is part of an ongoing dialogue between the media communities of the two countries initiated by the Office in 2014. As a result of the workshop, the journalists worked together to produce joint multimedia materials about different topics.

#SOFJO

On **13 June** my Office hosted a side event on the margins of the 2nd Gender Equality Review Conference in **Vienna**. The side event provided a platform for participating State

representatives, academics, journalists and members of civil society to discuss the issue of state-sponsored or supported harassment of female journalists online.

On **26-27 September** my Office organized a networking and training workshop for 25 journalists, academics and members of civil society. The first of two planned workshops, the event focused on the specific topics of trauma, advocacy and digital safety. The event took place in **Vienna** as part of my Office's Safety of Female Journalists Online (#SOFJO) project.

Round-table discussions between Ukrainian and Russian media trade unions

On **18 June and 2 November** my Office organized the 15th and 16th round table discussions in **Vienna** among senior representatives of the Russian Union of Journalists and the National Union of the Journalists of Ukraine. Participants discussed the current state of affairs of safety of journalists in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea, hate speech in their respective countries and common projects and activities. During the course of the meetings, the Unions adopted joint statements on Ukrainian journalist Stanislav Aseev, held in illegal custody in the armed conflict zone in Donbas, calling for information on his fate and for joint efforts to release him (please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/324546> and www.osce.org/fom/354651).

Media Freedom in Volatile Environments

On **19-20 June** my Office organized an international conference "Media Freedom in Volatile Environments" at the Hofburg in **Vienna**. The objective of the event was for Ukrainian media professionals and organizations to benefit from experience and expertise gathered from throughout the OSCE region. The event was a follow-up to the conference "Journalists' Safety, Media Freedom and Pluralism in Times of Conflict" organized by my Office in June 2015 which looked at the multi-faceted ways in which journalism can contribute to or help ease tensions during conflict.

Over 300 experts, civil society members, government authorities, journalists and human rights advocates discussed issues such as accreditation and access to information in conflict areas, "fake news", media and digital literacy, safety of journalists and impunity for crimes against them, and media self-regulation.

More information on the event can be found here: <http://www.osce.org/fom/314201>.

Conference on safety of journalists

On **3 July**, together with the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian Journalists Union, my Office organized a conference "Safety of Journalists – New Challenges and Responses" in **Vilnius**. Over 140 experts, civil society members, government authorities and journalists gathered to review the current situation and recent developments with a particular focus on identifying the new challenges relating to the safety of journalists in the OSCE region.

The event also served as a platform to take stock of the implementation of the 2011 Vilnius Recommendations on Safety of Journalists and to provide input for a new edition of the *Safety of Journalists Guidebook*, to be published by my Office.

High-level Civil Society Engagement Roundtable

On **5 September** my Office, in cooperation with the European Federation of Journalists, organized a media roundtable event in **Brussels**, with representatives from civil society and non-governmental organizations working on media freedom and freedom of expression. At the event, I discussed effective strategies and areas for cooperation given the current media environment in the OSCE region and beyond with key partners.

Cyprus Dialogue

On **25 April**, as part of the Cyprus Dialogue launched in March 2017, my Office led a meeting in **Nicosia** for 30 Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot journalists who discussed ways to enhance their co-operation and adopted a joint Memorandum of Understanding. The journalists were joined by two renowned experts from the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the Ethical Journalism Network. In the Memorandum, published in Greek, Turkish and English, the heads of three journalists' unions agree to mutual co-operation and solidarity on issues of journalists' safety, access to information and adherence to professional standards. During the meeting participants also discussed issues including ethics, good governance and self-regulation in their work.

On **22 August** my Office launched an exchange programme for young Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot journalists interested in experiencing and sharing stories of bi-communal life in Cyprus.

On **9 October** I met with journalists and media experts in **Nicosia** as part of the Office's ongoing "Cyprus Dialogue", launched in March 2017. Included in the meeting were heads of the unions of journalists and the heads of the press councils from the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities, with Cypriot as well as international media experts, and with representatives of civil society. The topics discussed included current issues affecting media freedom, the freedom of expression and quality journalism on the island, an exchange program for young journalists and the creation of a glossary of sensitive words often used in the media. The meeting was organized in order to exchange ideas and discuss further co-operation in an effort to improve quality journalism in Cyprus.

Internet Freedom Conference: the role and responsibilities of internet intermediaries

On **13 October** my Office, together with the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship and the Czech Chairmanship of the CoE, in partnership with the Austrian Federal Chancellery, and the CoE Information Society and Action against Crime Directorate, co-organized an internet freedom conference in **Vienna** on the role and responsibilities of internet intermediaries, which critically influence the way we receive and impart information in the digital age, during which I was one of the opening speakers.

The conference provided a space for a critical and constructive exchange on these issues and bring together key stakeholders – governments, civil society, international organizations including the OSCE, CoE, the European Commission, and UNESCO, non-governmental organizations such as Article 19 and EDRI, academia including from Amsterdam, Moscow, Istanbul and Vienna, lawyers and judges, and the private sector including Google and Facebook.

More information about the event can be found here: <https://www.osce.org/internet-freedom>.

Central Asia Media Conference

On **18-19 October** my Office organized the 19th regional Central Asia media conference titled "Open journalism in Central Asia" in **Tashkent**. During the two-day event, some 80 participants, including journalists, representatives from governments, civil society organizations and academia from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Mongolia along with international experts, discussed current challenges to media freedom in Central Asia and adopted recommendations.

The main topic of the conference was open journalism in Central Asia, with sessions on current tendencies in news media distribution, new professional challenges and opportunities for journalists in a digital environment, approaches to counter disinformation and propaganda, and latest media freedom developments in Central Asia.

More information about the event can be found here: <https://www.osce.org/fom/328101>.

Planned activities for the next reporting period

Visits and participation in events

On **13-14 November** I will pay a first official visit to **Skopje** to meet the Government Authorities to discuss a wide range of media related issues in the country. I will also meet with media representatives and civil society organizations.

On **14-15 November** my Office will host the second #SOFJO networking and training workshop for journalists, academics and members of civil society in **Vienna**. The event will focus on the specific topics of advocacy, newsroom practices and legal framework with regards to the safety of female journalists online.

On **16-17 November** I will travel to **Berlin** to participate in a panel on "How do Media Freedom and Internet Governance Overlap" with the Advisory Group of the Internet Governance Forum. During the trip I will also meet with members of foundations and representatives of the media community.

On **16-18 November** my Office will give a presentation on safety of female journalists online at the Association of European Journalists Congress and General Assembly in **Vilnius**.

On **21 November** I will join the Opening Ceremony of the "Dialogue of Cultures", the 12th Media-Forum of young journalists from Russia, EU, and CIS countries in the State Hermitage Museum in **St. Petersburg**.

On **30 November** I will attend the 30th anniversary of Article 19 in **London**.

On **30 November – 1 December** my Office will participate in the 14th German-Russian Media Forum in **Stavropol**, Russia.

In **December** my office will publish the 3rd edition of the OSCE *Guidebook on Safety of Journalists* in order to better assist the OSCE participating States in their efforts to ensure safe working conditions for journalists in the OSCE region. The Guidebook, in English and

Russian, will outline the updated situation and latest developments since the previous edition of 2014, including gender-based threats of violence, harassment and intimidation of journalists online.

On **12 December** I will participate in the “Expert Meeting on Impunity for the Killing of Journalists in the OSCE Region” to be held in **Vienna**.

On **13 December** I will travel to **Stockholm** to meet with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister Margot Wallström.

On **18 December** my Office will host, together with the Swedish delegation and International Press Institute, a high-level panel and exhibition on the collective work of the Office and other institutions on the safety of female journalists online. The panel and exhibition, taking place in **Vienna**, will showcase the work done on the project in 2017 and highlight those areas where additional work and resources are needed as the project moves into its next phase in 2018.

On **19-20 December** I will attend the 12th annual meeting of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in **Geneva**.

Cyprus Media Dialogue

By the **end of 2017**, as part of an exchange program supported by my Office, a group of young journalists will work at a media outlet of the other community for one week. They will share their experiences with their respective communities, promoting cooperation and understanding through journalism. In addition, my Office will also coordinate the development of a glossary of sensitive words used by the media, and recommendations for possible alternatives.

Extra-budgetary donors

My thanks go to the governments of Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and United States for their generous contributions during this reporting period.

I encourage all participating States to consider supporting my Office’s efforts to provide expertise, support and the most up-to-date resources for the promotion and protection of freedom of the media and freedom of expression throughout the OSCE region.

Annex:

Informal Briefing on the Activities of the Office of the RFOM to the OSCE Chairmanship

for the period from 10 March 2017 until 19 May 2017

Media Developments noted in participating States

In **March** in Albania, journalist Isa Myzyraj, from the online website “Gazeta Impact” reportedly received two death threats during the course of his investigative journalism work. The second threat was allegedly made by the Mayor of Has, Adem Lala. Myzyraj reported the threat to the police and filed a complaint to the Tirana Prosecutor on 6 April. The Association of Professional Journalists and Union of Albanian Journalists condemned these threats and offered the journalist their support. The Delegation of Albania to the OSCE confirmed that on **7 April** the Tirana Prosecutor’s Office filed a criminal complaint following the case submitted by the journalist, which is currently being verified by the Prosecutor’s Office to determine further procedures pursuant to the provisions of domestic criminal law. The RFOM has made a number of statements on the importance of safety of journalists. For reference, please see <http://bit.ly/2nga3E9>.

It has been widely reported that from **March to May** in Belarus, more than 100 journalists and bloggers have been intimidated and harassed for their professional work. Many media workers experienced short-term detentions while covering and/or attempting to cover public protests throughout the country in March, and some have been fined or placed under administrative imprisonment. Reportedly, there have been several instances in which law enforcement representatives have used force against the journalists. There have been at least 20 cases in which freelance journalists were detained, warned, received fines or are awaiting trial for working with foreign media without accreditation.

The RFOM has made a number of statements on the situation of journalists in the country. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/80536> and <http://www.osce.org/fom/150011>.

From **March to May** a number of threats were reported against journalists in Serbia including Nedim Sejdinović, President of the Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina (NDNV), Dinko Gruhonjić, Programme Editor at NDNV, Jovana Gligorijević, *Vreme* weekly journalist, and Vlado Madžoski, journalist from *Zaječar*. Some of these cases were reported to the police by using mechanisms of the agreement on cooperation and measures for increasing the safety of journalists.

The RFOM has made a number of statements on the importance of safety of journalists. For reference, please see <http://bit.ly/2nga3E9>.

In Azerbaijan on **10 March** changes were introduced to the Law on Information, Informatization and Protection of Information, and the Law on Telecommunication,

reportedly allowing the Ministry for Transportation, Communications and New Technologies to monitor online content and request the website owner and its hosting provider to remove information that glorifies terrorism and/or extremism, justifies suicide, provides advice on the making of firearms and illegal drugs, divulges state secrets, promotes gambling, or is found to be pornographic, libelous, slanderous, or infringing on privacy. If the requested information is not removed within eight hours, a motion to block the website is filed with the court, which shall review the case within five days. The amendments also vest the Ministry with the power to temporarily block websites pending the court decision, as well as to introduce a registry of website containing prohibited information which providers would be obliged to block.

The RFOM has previously made statements regarding similar state regulation of the internet. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/109885>.

In Italy, on **12 March**, television journalist Luca Abete and his crew were physically attacked in Caserta by unknown assailants while filming a report on the sale of counterfeit items. The RFOM has made a number of statements on the importance of safety of journalists. For reference, please see <http://bit.ly/2nga3E9>.

On **13 March** it was reported that the Office of the Prosecutor General in Kyrgyzstan filed a lawsuit against ProMedia Foundation, the founder of Zanoza.kg, with damages totalling three million KGS (40,262 EUR) and against Naryn Idinov (Ayyp), a journalist with Zanoza.kg, claiming damages of three million KGS (40,262 EUR). The charges are based on an article published in October 2015. On **14 March** the accounts of the above-mentioned outlets were frozen by a court decision. It was also reported that a flat belonging to Naryn Idinov was seized as collateral.

The issue of disproportionately high damages in civil defamation cases involving a public figure has been repeatedly raised by the RFOM, in many OSCE participating States, including in Kyrgyzstan. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/210251>.

In Serbia, on **14 March**, freelance journalist Stefan Cvetković was sentenced by the Basic Court in Višac to two years and three months in prison and a fine of 2,150,000 million dinars (approximately 17,300 EUR) following a law suit filed by three local politicians on charges of “insult, unauthorized publication and presentation of someone’s writings, portraits, and recordings.” The Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia (NUNS) and the Independent Journalists’ Association of Vojvodina (NDNV) expressed their concern about the verdict. On 11 April, High Court in Pancevo annulled the verdicts in all cases against the journalist.

The RFOM has repeatedly called on States to decriminalise defamation and insult and released a comparative study “Defamation and Insult Laws in the OSCE Region”. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/303176>.

In Canada, the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled on **22 March** that VICE News reporter Ben Makuch must hand all communications between him and an ISIS fighter over to the police. The RFOM has previously urged states to safeguard the protection of journalists’ sources. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/173311>.

On **26 March** at least 15 international and local journalists were reportedly detained while covering protests in different cities in the Russian Federation, including Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Some journalists were also reportedly threatened by police and some were reportedly attacked by police in Saint Petersburg and Petrozavodsk.

The RFOM has made repeated calls to ensure that journalists are allowed to report on issues of public interest including demonstrations.

On **28 March** Sergei Khazov-Kassia and Andrey Kostyanov, journalists with Radio Svoboda (RFE/RL), were reportedly attacked and beaten by a group of unidentified people in Kropotkin in the Krasnodar region of the Russian Federation. The assailants seized personal belongings and the journalists' equipment, some of which was later returned. Kostyanov was hospitalized with a broken rib, while Khazov-Kassia received minor injuries. The journalists were planning to cover the farmers' protest. Police have, reportedly, begun an investigation into the case.

The RFOM has made a number of statements on the importance of safety of journalists. For reference, please see <http://bit.ly/2nga3E9>.

On **28 March** the Russian President signed a law on online live reporting from open trials on television, radio and the internet which will only allow broadcasts with judicial permission and location specification. Although journalists will continue to be allowed to carry out audio and text recordings during open trials, the law imposes a full ban on broadcasts of preliminary hearings ahead of trials.

The RFOM has previously addressed this issue. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/98139>.

On **28 March**, the Russian President signed a law prohibiting “undesirable” foreign or international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from creating legal entities in the country.

The RFOM has previously expressed concern about the legislation. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/159081>.

On **29 March** Cassandra Vera, a 21 year old student was convicted in Spain for ‘glorifying terrorism’ and ‘humiliating victims’, and given a one year suspended sentence and seven years of exclusion from publicly funded employment for a 2013 tweet about the 1973 assassination of Prime Minister Luis Carrero Blanco. The sentence has led to a debate in Spain regarding this legislation and the restrictions it places on freedom of expression. The RFOM has issued a Communiqué on free expression and the fight against terrorism. <http://www.osce.org/fom/261951>.

On **30 March** the parliament of Moldova adopted a set of amendments to the Audiovisual Code which were originally approved in the first reading in July 2016. Reportedly, lawmakers dropped the restrictive provisions banning broadcasts or rebroadcasts of certain content that originates from states that are neither members of the European Union, nor parties to the European Convention on Transfrontier Television.

The RFOM has previously made statements on this issue. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/253346>.

On **31 March** in Belarus police searched the two offices of a Belsat satellite TV channel in Minsk, seized equipment and detained cameraman Aleksandr Lyubenchuk.

In the Netherlands in **early April**, the Senate began deliberations on the draft Law on Intelligence and Security Services, following its adoption by the Second Chamber in February 2017. The draft legislation would result in a lack of protection against mass surveillance between journalists and their sources. A number of organizations, including the

National Union of Journalists (NVJ), have voiced their concern that the draft law should be adapted to respect the right of journalists to protect their sources.

The RFOM previously expressed concern about the legislation in a letter to the Minister of the Interior and Parliament. For reference, please see the Report to the Permanent Council <http://www.osce.org/fom/303956>. The letter is now part of Senate deliberations.

In **early April** the Office noted that the French Attorney-General has initiated investigations into a number of death threats received by mail by several journalists from Mediapart, the Journal du Dimanche and the Canard Enchaîné.

The RFOM has made a number of statements on the importance of safety of journalists. For reference, please see <http://bit.ly/2nga3E9>.

In **April**, Loes Reijmer, a Dutch journalist at the daily newspaper *De Volkskrant*, was targeted with verbal sexual abuse, including hundreds of explicit rape threats, on the popular website *GeenStijl*, after she criticized its ‘mysogynistic’ content. The incident has been condemned by the Dutch Journalists’ Association as an attempt to silence female journalists. In an open letter, more than one hundred women working in media and entertainment, supported by two government ministers, have called on major companies to stop advertising on *GeenStijl* and its affiliated video blog *Dumpert*.

The RFOM has made a number of statements on the importance of safety of journalists <http://bit.ly/2nga3E9> and especially on countering online abuse of female journalists <http://www.osce.org/fom/193556>.

In Turkey on **1 April**, the Istanbul 25th Heavy Penal Court ruled that 21 imprisoned journalists should be released. A few hours later, the ruling was overturned and new detention warrants have been issued for 13 of the journalists. The other eight journalists remain in prison following a successful appeal by prosecution. Most of the journalists are former employees of the *Zaman* media group. If convicted, they face up to 10 years for various articles and tweets.

The total number of journalists who have been imprisoned for their work remains close to 200 in Turkey, with the overwhelming majority imprisoned following the coup attempt of July 2016. According to their lawyers, several arrested journalists are kept in isolation with very limited time outside their cells, with few communication possibilities and many of them lack medical treatment. International human rights organizations and members of Parliament have consistently raised concern regarding the torture of journalists in prison.

The RFOM has repeatedly called for the immediate release of all journalists imprisoned for their work throughout the OSCE region, and for the fundamental reform of laws that allow imprisonment for journalistic work.

On **2 April**, Sisak Gabrielian, the correspondent for RFE/RL’s Armenian service was reportedly attacked while covering parliamentary elections in Yerevan, after having identified voting irregularities at a polling station, and suffered a minor injury. Reportedly, the Prosecutor General’s Office has been aware about the incident and instructed the police to investigate it. On 14 May, the journalist was reportedly verbally abused and assaulted while covering the municipal elections in Yerevan.

On **4 April**, the indictment was issued against 21 persons, including 19 employees of the daily *Cumhuriyet* in Turkey. According to the indictment, the journalists are accused of aiding an illegal organization through their articles and tweets. The majority of the *Cumhuriyet* staff, including journalists and managers of the newspaper, have been in prison

since November or December 2016 awaiting indictment. Among the accused are journalists Ahmet Şık, Kadri Gürsel and Can Dündar, with whom the Office has closely worked for several years.

On **6 April**, a group of people in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia attempted to physically assault Bozhidar Barlakoski, a journalist from *Plus Info* web portal. After covering a session of Parliament, Barlakoski was on his way home when he was attacked by the group near the Soravia shopping mall. He managed to escape by taxi and reported the incident to the police.

The RFOM has made a number of statements on the importance of safety of journalists. For reference, please see <http://bit.ly/2nga3E9>.

On **10 April**, it was reported that the investigative Greek journalist and publisher of *Documento*, Kostas Vaxevanis, was briefly detained, after the wife of the Governor of the Bank of Greece filed a lawsuit against the journalist for libel, calling for his immediate arrest. The journalist, who voluntarily went to the police, was released later that day, pending investigation.

The RFOM has previously supported the decriminalization of defamation and insult law in the OSCE region. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/303176>.

On **11 April**, Turkish police detained Italian journalist and documentary filmmaker Gabriele Del Grande in the southeastern province of Hatay. He was released and deported on 24 April.

On **11 April** a car belonging to Ruslan Solovyev, contributor to newspaper *Gorod Nikopol*, was set on fire in Nikopol in the Dnipropetrovsk oblast in Ukraine. According to the journalist, the attack could be linked to his professional activity. Police have reportedly opened an investigation.

The RFOM has made a number of statements on the importance of safety of journalists. For reference, please see <http://bit.ly/2nga3E9>.

In Turkey on **12 April**, all 13 defendants accused in the six-year-long trial of ODA TV were acquitted by the Istanbul 18th Heavy Penal Court.

On **13 April** Russian *Novaya Gazeta* issued a statement saying it feared for the safety of its reporters after Adam Shahidov, an advisor to the Chechen President, along with Muslim preachers accused the newspaper of defamation and threatened retaliation at a large gathering in a mosque in Grozny. At the beginning of April 2017 the newspaper published investigative articles reporting persecution of men suspected of homosexual acts.

The RFOM has previously highlighted incidents involving journalists working in the Chechen Republic and threats by the authorities toward media workers. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/226776>.

On **14 April** it was reported that in Uzbekistan free-lance journalist Aleksey Volosevich was detained while taking photographs in Gazli town and held in custody for 18 hours at a police precinct. After 18 hours of interrogations he was released.

The RFOM has repeatedly raised similar cases on detention of journalists while performing professional duties. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/273691>.

On **18 April**, *TV Valjevo Plus* Chief Editor Predrag Lukić and cameraman Vasilije Ristović were assaulted by a group of people, reportedly in order to prevent them from filming the area. One assailant took and disabled the camera. The case has been reported to the police and condemned by the Journalists Association of Serbia (UNS) and Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia (NUNS).

The RFOM has made a number of statements on the importance of safety of journalists. For reference, please see <http://bit.ly/2nga3E9>.

In Croatia on **18 April**, Siniša Vickov, journalist from Radio Brač was beaten by two security guards in front of the Spit-Dalmatia County assembly. According to the reports, the journalist was trying to enter the building where the assembly was held, when he was attacked despite identifying himself as a journalist. Vickov was hospitalized with head injuries and two broken ribs. The Croatian Journalists' Association, the Sport Journalists of HND and FIJET condemned this attack.

The RFOM has made a number of statements on the importance of safety of journalists. For reference, please see <http://bit.ly/2nga3E9>.

On **19 April** in the Russian Federation Nikolay Andruschenko, journalist and co-founder of *Noviy Peterburg* newspaper, died in hospital after being brutally attacked in March 2017 in Saint Petersburg. He suffered a number of serious injuries to his head and never recovered after being placed in a medically-induced coma. The journalist was well-known for his investigative reporting.

The RFOM has made a number of statements on the importance of safety of journalists. For reference, please see <http://bit.ly/2nga3E9>.

On **21 April** the Russian State Duma adopted amendments to the Statute on Information, Information Technologies and Protection of Information that introduce regulations on foreign and national online cinemas which includes strict responsibilities for the owners of audiovisual services, limits foreign participation in the ownership or control of an audiovisual service to 20 percent, prohibits dissemination of certain content such as election campaign material, “extremist material”, “propaganda of pornography”, “cult of violence”, and obscene words, obliges the owners of the audiovisual services to abide by the Russian rules on age ratings for audiovisual products and generally follow other laws such as the statute on the Mass Media (which, among other provisions, prohibits rebroadcasting TV channels and programmes that have not been registered as mass media outlets in Russia). The RFOM earlier addressed changes to legislation on foreign media ownership requirements in Russia. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/124143>

The RFOM criticized imprecise wording of anti-extremism legislation in Russia which resulted in individuals not knowing whether their actions are legal. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/120175>

The RFOM deplored the excessive obligations earlier put on online services by amendments to the same law. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/117950>

On **24 April**, reportedly 10 masked people entered the offices of the Greek daily publication *Kathimerini* around midnight, throwing paint on the walls and spreading flyers containing threats against journalists. The Athens Union of Journalists expressed its support to all employees of the newspaper, and all political parties condemned the attack.

The RFOM has made a number of statements on the importance of safety of journalists. For reference, please see <http://bit.ly/2nga3E9>.

In the Russian Federation **on 26 April**, Ilya Varlamov, well-known photo blogger and contributor to Echo Moskvy, was attacked by unknown assailants with green paint and iodine at the airport in Stavropol. Later that day the journalist was, once again, attacked in a similar manner.

The RFOM has made a number of statements on the importance of safety of journalists. For reference, please see <http://bit.ly/2nga3E9>.

On 27 April in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, during the attack on the Parliament, at least two journalists were injured and many others threatened. Meta News Agency journalist Dimitar Tanurov had his phone taken, was beaten, and verbally assaulted by protesters while taking pictures of the attack. Nikola Ordevski, cameraman with the *Makfax* news agency was also physically attacked, sustaining a head injury. *TV Telma* crew members, Radio Free Europe journalist Zorana Gadzovska Spasovska, and *Anadolu* cameraman Vedat Abdul are among those journalists subject to assault or threat during the event.

The RFOM has made a number of statements on the importance of safety of journalists. For reference, please see <http://bit.ly/2nga3E9>.

On 27 April, the Turkish authorities did not renew the press accreditation of German *Stern* magazine journalist Raphael Geiger due to his allegedly insulting remarks about the President. Geiger has worked in Istanbul since 2015 and moved to Athens following the incident.

On 29 April in Serbia, it was reported that Dzeljaj Behlulji, one of the owners of *TV Spektri* was verbally threatened in Bujanovac by President of the Assembly of Bujanovac, Jonuz Musliju and his two sons. Musliju was allegedly unhappy with the critical reporting by *TV Spektri*.

The RFOM has made a number of statements on the importance of safety of journalists. For reference, please see <http://bit.ly/2nga3E9>.

On 29 April, Turkish authorities decreed that the political magazine *Yürüyüş* and the regional newspaper *Van İpekyolu Haber* be closed.

On 29 April an Ankara court ordered the ban of Wikipedia in Turkey, based on Law 5651. The RFOM has previously called for the fundamental reform of Law 5651, also known as the Internet Law of Turkey, and offered assistance to Turkey to bring the law in line with international standards on online freedom of expression. <http://www.osce.org/fom/233926>.

On 2 May, a Turkish court ruled to release imprisoned journalist and law student Ayşenur Parıldak. She was arrested again that evening on new charges related to her work as a journalist. Parıldak is a former reporter from the closed *Zaman* daily, and has been in prison since August 2016.

In Azerbaijan **on 2 May** Aziz Orudjev, Head of internet TV channel *Kanal 13*, was reportedly arrested and sentenced to 30 days imprisonment for disobeying police in Baku.

On 2 May the editorial office of newspaper Svetlovodsk Vercherniy was shot at in Svetlovodsk in the Kirovograd oblast in Ukraine. No injuries have been reported, but the journalists have linked the attack to the scope of their professional activities. Police have reportedly opened an investigation.

On **2 May**, the 1st Penal Court of Peace in Ankara in Turkey ruled to block access to several hundred social media accounts.

On **3 May** the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of the Kyrgyz Republic accepted a motion to render Art. 1 and Art. 4 of the Law on Guarantees to Activities of the President unconstitutional. Art. 4 stipulates that the Prosecutor-General is responsible for protection of reputation of the President.

In the Netherlands on **3 May**, the Dutch Journalists' Association published a survey showing an increase in threats against journalists in the Netherlands. The survey indicated that more than 60% of Dutch journalists experienced harassment, threats and/or intimidation during the course of the last year.

On **4 May**, media reported the expulsion of Julia Halasz, a reporter from news website *444.hu*, from a public event in Budapest, Hungary hosted by Fidesz, the country's governing party. An attendee of the event reportedly took the journalist's phone, and verbally and physically assaulted her, pulling her down a flight of stairs. Fidesz denies the journalist's claims, stating that the journalist failed to comply with the event's press guidelines. On numerous occasions, the RFOM emphasized the responsibility of the authorities to ensure free and safe working conditions for journalists covering public events.

On **9 May**, the European Broadcasting Union sent a letter to the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina expressing their concern that the State is at risk to become the only European country without a national service broadcaster.

In May 2016, the RFOM called on the authorities and the steering boards of the public broadcasters to act immediately to ensure the full implementation of relevant laws, and prevent a total shut down of the public broadcaster. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/243951>.

On **9 May** the Office noted that in the United States Public News Service journalist Dan Heyman was arrested by police at the West Virginia state capitol in Charleston after having attempted to ask Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price a question concerning draft legislation on the country's health care system. Heyman was reportedly pulled aside, handcuffed, arrested and jailed on the charge of wilful disruption of state government processes. He was later released on a \$5,000 bail.

The RFOM has repeatedly condemned the arrest and imprisonment of journalists for exercising their profession. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/278326> and <http://www.osce.org/fom/247701>.

On **10 May** in Ireland, police reportedly dropped a prosecution against the British comedian Stephen Fry after a formal complaint was made against him in relation to comments he made in a television interview in 2015. The prosecution had been brought under the Defamation Act 2009 and Ireland's constitution which criminalise blasphemy.

The RFOM previously welcomed the decriminalisation of blasphemy in Iceland and Norway. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/169916>.

On **10 May** Gabriele Carchidi, Editor-in-Chief of the online newspaper *iacchite.com* was convicted and sentenced by a court in Cosenza, in the Calabrian region of southern Italy, to a total of 30 months in prison following four separate cases of libel against the journalist. The

most recent conviction is the result of a lawsuit initiated by the mayor of Cosenza regarding references the journalist made to the mayor on Facebook. The other convictions also relate to reports made by the journalist concerning the behaviour of senior Carabinieri officers, the mayor and a magistrate of Cosenza. Carchidi is currently awaiting the result of his appeal with regard to the four cases.

On **10 May**, the Prime Minister of Malta announced his intention to file a libel lawsuit against journalist Matthew Caruana Galizia.

The RFOM has previously urged politicians to endure a higher threshold of criticism and scrutiny regarding their public work. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/299941>.

In Ukraine on **10 May** the Lviv Oblast Prosecutor's Office reported that a university student received a 2.5-year suspended sentence for posting photos and other material with communist symbols on his Facebook page. The student was sentenced under the law criminalizing public denial of the activities of the communist regime and banning all related symbols, with the exception of limited educational or scientific purposes.

The RFOM has previously addressed the issue. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/158581>.

On **11 May** in Tajikistan, Mijgona Halimova, a journalist with Ozodagon news agency, who previously worked with the now closed Najot newspaper, was fined by the court on charges of failing to report a criminal act. Halimova was ordered to pay 25,000 TJS (2,690 EUR).

The RFOM has previously raised the issue of imposition of disproportionate fines on journalists. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/210251> and <http://www.osce.org/fom/91937>.

On **12 May** President Atambaev of Kyrgyzstan suggested that the Prosecutor-General withdraw charges against radio Azattyk.

On **12 May** a court in Baku ordered the blocking of the websites of newspaper Azadliq, the Azerbaijan service of RFE/RL and the internet resource hosting foreign-based online platforms *Azerbaijan Saati*, *Meydan TV* and *Turan TV*. Reportedly, the decision followed a lawsuit filed by the Ministry for Transportation, Communications and High Technologies, "in view of creation of threats to the interests of the state and society protected by the law" in late April 2017.

The RFOM has previously made statements regarding similar state regulation of the internet. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/109885>.

On **12 May** in Turkey police detained Oğuz Güven, the Chief Online Editor of the daily Cumhuriyet. On **15 May** the journalist was formally arrested on terrorism charges for a tweet, the wording of which the court deemed controversial. The tweet was deleted 55 seconds after it was posted.

On **12 May** the Moldovan border service reportedly denied entry to Dmitriy Yermolayev, Chief Editor of newspaper *Rossiiskiy Vestnik*, and Latvian journalist Andrey Tatarchuk at Chisinau airport. The RFOM issued a Communiqué on denial of entry of journalists from one OSCE participating State to another <http://www.osce.org/fom/117092>

On **12 May**, a Croatian journalist from online portal *034.rh*, Mladen Mirković, was attacked by the Mayor of Požega, Vedran Neferović. The media reported that Neferović physically and verbally assaulted the journalist, threatening to kill him and all *034.rh* staff. Mirković was hospitalized following the encounter. The attack was reported to the police and condemned by the Prime Minister of Croatia Andrej Plenković, the Croatian Journalists' Association (CJA), and local branch of the SDP party. On **13 May**, the journalist reported another phone threat to police. The CJA welcomed the quick response of police which resulted in the detention of a possible suspect.

The issue of safety of journalists is a top priority for the RFOM and has been raised multiple times. For reference, please see <http://bit.ly/2nga3E9>

In Kazakhstan on **14 May**, it was widely reported that Ramadan Esergepov, chairman of the media support NGO "Journalists in Need", was attacked, sustaining a knife wound, while boarding a train to meet with the Ambassador of Lithuania and international experts regarding the case of detained journalist Zhanbolat Mamay. The investigation under Art. 24 (planning a crime and attempting a crime) and Art. 99 (murder) of the criminal code of Kazakhstan was initiated by the department of internal affairs.

The issue of safety of journalists is a top priority for the RFOM and has been raised multiple times. For reference, please see <http://bit.ly/2nga3E9>.

On **15 May** the Ukrainian President signed a decree extending the scope of sanctions, originally introduced in September 2015, to include several hundred companies and individuals that pose a “threat to national interests” or promote “terrorist activities”. The decree orders the blocking of some Russian online services and social networking platforms in Ukraine. The time period set for application of the sanction is three years. New sanctions have also been imposed on a number of Russian television companies and at least 10 media workers.

The RFOM has previously addressed this issue. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/182661>.

On **15 May** it was reported that Swedish investigative crime reporter Håkan Slagbrand was assaulted in his home by an unknown man early in the morning, sustaining injuries to his face. Slagbrand has previously had a firebomb thrown at his car.

In the United States on **18 May**, the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Ajit Pai, published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking which indicates that the commission will consider a proposal, “Restoring Internet Freedom”, which would remove net neutrality protections adopted by the previous administration, at its open meeting. The proposal would transform the position of internet providers from “common carriers” to “information services” and thus remove the FCC’s powers of oversight needed to enforce net neutrality.

The RFOM has previously commended the existing rules preserving an open internet and has commissioned an analysis on net neutrality rules. For reference, please see <http://www.osce.org/fom/143066> and <http://www.osce.org/fom/119822>.

Projects and activities since the last report

Legal reviews

On **23 March** at the request of Minister of Justice H.E. Owen Bonnici and as a follow-up to the detailed legal review prepared by the Office on 2 March, the Office shared with the authorities a short expert review on the latest amendments to the Media and Defamation Bill of Malta. The review welcomed several changes to the draft law, and highlighted those elements that need further improvement.

On **19 May** the Office presented to authorities a legal review of a draft law On Amendments and Addenda to Some Legal Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Issues of Information and Communications. The review was carried out by the Office at the request of civil society and journalists' organizations and analysed amendments relevant for freedom of the media and right to access information from the perspective of international treaties, the Constitution of Kazakhstan and OSCE commitments.

On **19 May** the Office presented a legal review to the German authorities. The review, commissioned upon request of civil society and journalists' organisations, analysed the draft law On Better Law Enforcement in Social Networks. The review welcomed several changes in the draft law but also recommended a number of areas where further improvement is needed.

Office participation in events

On **16 March** the Office gave a presentation on propaganda and freedom of the media for the faculty and students from and organized by the School of Journalism and Information of the University of **Warsaw**.

On **23 March** the Office spoke at the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly Political Affairs Committee in **Brussels** upon request by the European Parliament on the issue of freedom of the media in the EU and in the Euronest countries.

On **28 March** the Office spoke at UNESCO informational meetings in **Paris** "on a review of developments in the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)," at the invitation of Director General Irina Bokova.

On **29-31 March**, the Office attended and spoke at a panel on "fake news" at the sixth instalment of RightsCon, the world's leading event on the future of the Internet, hosted by AccessNow in **Brussels**.

On **31 March** the Office participated in discussions in **Kharkiv** on ways to improve journalists' professional standards and safety as part of the "Two Countries – One Profession: A dialogue between journalists from Russia and Ukraine" project, supported by the Office of the RFOM since May 2014. The event was organized by the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine.

On **3-7 April** the Office participated as a judge at the 10th International Round of the Monroe E. Price Media Law Moot Court Competition, organized by Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy Centre for Socio-Legal Studies at the University of **Oxford**.

On **20 - 21 April** the Office gave a keynote address at the annual congress of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, in **Kyiv** followed by a panel discussion on safety of journalists.

On **24 April** the Office spoke at expert meeting on the EU single digital market and its challenges hosted by the Centre for World Cinemas & Digital Culture of the University of **Leeds**.

On **25 April**, the Office participated in regional consultations with relevant stakeholders of the UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights on “Defining the OHCHR’s Strategic Direction for 2018 in **Brussels**.”

On **27 April** the Office gave a presentation at the Ambassador Milton A. Wolf Media and Diplomacy Seminar, "The Marshall Plan and the Yearning for Transformative Visions" in **Vienna**. Participants discussed challenges to media freedom in modern diplomacy. The event was organized by the Austrian American Foundation, the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna and the Austrian Marshall Foundation.

On **27 - 28 April** the Office gave a presentation at the international scholarly conference, “Agents of Power in The Transformation of Media Systems”, organized by Inter University Center in **Dubrovnik**. The conference focused on the numerous factors behind the significant changes to the media landscapes in the period after the fall of communism.

On **2-4 May** the Office spoke at a session on the impact fake news and social media filters have on the role of journalism in society at the UNESCO celebration of World Press Freedom Day 2017 in **Jakarta** organized by Article 19 and Reporters Without Borders. The Office also participated as a speaker at a pre-event session, “Overview of Regional Mechanisms and Possible Models and mandate for a Special Mechanism in Southeast Asia: Views from Special Rapporteurs and Human Rights bodies” on international and regional models of promotion and protection of Freedom of Expression.

On **8 May** the Office spoke at a panel discussion following the Ciné-ONU screening of *Tickling Giants* in **Vienna** to mark the World Press Freedom Day.

On **10-12 May** the Office travelled to **Tashkent** to meet with government counterparts ahead of the 19th Central Asia Media Conference.

On **12 May** the Office participated in a panel debate at the conference, "Information and public debate in 21st century consolidated democracies: lessons from Italy - which issues and which reforms?" at the Senate of the Italian Republic in **Rome**.

On **13 May**, the Office gave a presentation at the conference “Rebuilding Trust: Interaction, Dialogue, Crisis Management” hosted by the Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination at Princeton University and the Austrian Chairmanship in **Vienna**, speaking at working session III on “Information Warfare: Fake News, Real Problems”.

On **16-18 May** the Office participated at the **Stockholm** Internet Forum organized by Sida, speaking at the session “Gender-based Violence Online: levelling the discussion”.

On **18 May** the Office participated in the 45th European Platform of Regulatory Authorities’ Meeting in **Edinburgh**, speaking at the plenary session on “News in the Digital Age” on the issue of “fake news”.

On **18 May** the Office moderated a panel on security implications of fake news and propaganda at the OSCE Security Days in **Prague**, hosted by the OSCE Secretary General.

Conferences

South Caucasus Media Conference

On **10-11 May** the Office held the 14th South Caucasus Media Conference in **Tbilisi** for more than 70 participants representing media, government, civil society and academia from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

The main topic of the conference was “fake news”, disinformation and freedom of the media, with sessions on challenges of disinformation and propaganda, media freedom in the digital age, approaches to counter disinformation and propaganda, and latest media freedom developments in the South Caucasus. Several international experts travelled to the region to share their experiences.

Participants adopted a set of recommendations on the challenges to free media and freedom of expression in the region and the best practices for improving professionalism and media freedom in the context of spreading “fake news”, disinformation and propaganda.

Cyprus Dialogue

On **25 April**, the Cyprus Dialogue, launched in March 2017, continued with an OSCE-led meeting in **Nicosia**. Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot journalists discussed ways to enhance their co-operation, and adopted a joint Memorandum of Understanding. More than 30 journalists participated at the event, which was hosted on the premises of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in the buffer zone of Nicosia. The journalists were joined by two renowned experts from the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the Ethical Journalism Network.

In the Memorandum, published in Greek, Turkish and English, the heads of three journalists’ unions agree to mutual co-operation and solidarity on issues of journalists’ safety, access to information and adherence to professional standards.

During the meeting participants also discussed issues including ethics, good governance and self-regulation in their work.

Planned activities for the next reporting period

Office participation in events

On **22 May** the Office will speak at the Eighth Central Asian Internet Development Forum in **Almaty**.

On **11-20 June** the Office will organize a media production workshop in **Vienna** for a group of young journalists from Ukraine and Russia, together with the Russian Union of Journalists and the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine. The activity is as part of an on-going dialogue between the media communities of the two countries initiated by the Office in 2014.

On **12-13 June** the Office will host a side event on online safety of female journalists during the Gender Equality Review Conference in **Vienna**.

On **13-14 June** the Office will participate in the conference “National Public Service Broadcasting in Bosnia and Herzegovina” organized by BHRT and BH Journalists in co-operation with the European Broadcasting Union, Office of the OSCE Representative of Freedom of the Media, Council of Europe, European Federation of Journalists and South Eastern European Media Organization in **Sarajevo**.

On **14-18 July** the Office, together with the OSCE Mission to Serbia, SHARE Foundation and the Embassy of the Netherlands in Belgrade will organize, a “Digital-born Media Carnival” on digital news media and freedom of expression in the digital environment in **Kotor**, Montenegro.

Conferences

On **19-20 June** the Office will host a conference “Media Freedom in Volatile Environments” in **Vienna**. The event will look at the multi-faceted ways in which journalism can contribute to or help ease tensions during conflict. Experts, civil society members, government authorities, journalists and human rights advocates will gather to discuss innovative initiatives taking place throughout the OSCE region that have improved dialogue and access to information during conflict.

On **3 July**, together with the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian Journalists Union, the Office will host a conference “Safety of Journalists – New Challenges and Responses” in **Vilnius**. The purpose of the conference is to review the current situation and recent developments with a particular focus on identifying the new challenges relating to the safety of journalists in the OSCE region.

The conference will also serve as a platform to take stock of the implementation of the Vilnius Recommendations on Safety of Journalists (2011) and to provide input for a new edition of the *OSCE Guidebook on Safety of Journalists* in order to better assist the OSCE participating States in their efforts to ensure safe working conditions for journalists in the OSCE region.

In **October** the Office will organize the 19th Central Asia Media Conference in **Tashkent**.

OSCE participating State contributions

The governments of Germany, Luxembourg, Ireland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway and the United States and the United Kingdom generously contributed to the work of the Office during this reporting period, through extra-budgetary contributions and staff secondments.