

22nd CENTRAL ASIA MEDIA CONFERENCE

Strengthening Media Diversity and Pluralism in Central Asia

Online | 7- 9 October 2020

Draft Annotated Agenda

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Over the last 20 years, the Central Asia Media Conference (CAMC), organized by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM), has been, and continues to be, a unique event for the exchange of information and experiences on media freedom developments among all five countries in the region.

The main theme of this year's edition will be countering so-called harmful content in online and offline media while upholding human rights and freedom of the media commitments. The discussion will include recent moves by governments and platforms to regulate harmful content nationally and throughout the OSCE region, and responses by media rights organizations.

Recalling the joint statement of 19 March with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Harlem Désir, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, David Kaye, and the IACHR Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, Edison Lanza, the Office of the OSCE RFoM reiterates that "the fundamental and non-derogable right to life is at stake, and governments are obligated to ensure its protection.

Human health depends not only on readily accessible health care. It also depends on access to accurate

information about the nature of the threats and the means to protect oneself, one's family, and one's community. The right to freedom of expression, which includes the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, through any media, applies to everyone, everywhere, and may only be subject to narrow restrictions."

The conference will gather approximately 100 participants from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, as well as Mongolia, representing the public authorities, media, journalists' associations, civil society and academia, to exchange views and best practices on the issue. The event will offer three online plenaries, which will allow for Q&A sessions. A guest video by one of the CAMC participants will be streamed after each session to highlight the work of national media rights and media development organizations in the region. The working languages will be English and Russian with simultaneous interpretation.



Day 1: Wednesday, 7 October

09:15–09:30
(VIENNA TIME)

Participants connect via ZOOM (access link to be provided to the registered participants)

09:30–12:00

OPENING SESSION

Welcoming remarks

- **Jürgen Heissel**, Director, Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media
- **Inid Milo**, Head, OSCE Chairmanship Task Force, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania

Moderator:

Elena Cherniavska, Senior Adviser, Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

SESSION I: Current regulations and action plans concerning harmful speech in CA and globally

The overall topic of the session is current regulations and action plans internationally and in OSCE participating States concerning curtailing harmful speech, online and offline, and practical responses to harmful speech in editorial offices. It is impossible to eliminate all illegal or harmful content online, but effective democratic tools can reduce the impact and spread of that content substantially. Democratic governments have a unique opportunity to build a legitimate framework for platform governance based on democratic values—principally freedom of expression and human rights, along with the rule of law. Governments, platforms and civil society play distinct and complementary roles in coming together to achieve this important goal.

The session comprises pre-recorded speeches of three experts, namely a speaker from Central Asia with an overview of how harmful speech (hate speech/extremism) is regulated in the region (15 minutes); an international speaker with an overview of recent legislative initiatives in the OSCE region (15 minutes); and an international editor with practical examples of dealing with controversial issues in an editorial office (15 min).

An interactive Q&A session with participation of speakers will be streamed live.

Moderator and Rapporteur: Naranjargal Khashkhuu, President and Board Chairperson, Globe International NGO

Panellists:

- **Marat Torobekov**, Lawyer, Civil Initiative on Internet Policy
- **Lorena Jaume-Palasi**, Executive Director, Ethical Tech Society
- **Hannah Storm**, Director and CEO, Ethical Journalism Network

Q&A

Guest Video

Closing of the session



Day 2: Thursday, 8 October

09:45–10:00
(VIENNA TIME)

Participants connect via ZOOM (access link to be provided to the registered participants)

10:00–12:00

SESSION II: Diversity in mainstream media. Minority media in pluralist society

Our societies have complex demographics, and migration trends within the OSCE suggest that this will continue to be the case in the foreseeable future. According to various studies, certain identity groups are under-represented in the mainstream media, with certain identities perceived as controversial and thus seldom reported on or in a particular way. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the fore the importance of balanced and representational reporting on societal matters, without racial or ethnic bias. What are the main challenges in such a complex and inter-connected region as Central Asia? Are media by minorities a solution? Can a regulator encourage more proper media representation of minority groups and a fair reflection of the cultural diversity? Or shall the matter be left to media/journalist associations and self-regulatory mechanisms?

The session comprises pre-recorded speeches of three experts, namely a speaker from Central Asia (15 minutes); an international speaker (15 minutes); and an international editor (15 min). An interactive Q&A session with the participation of speakers will be streamed live.

Moderator and Rapporteur: Inga Sikorskaia, Director for School of Peacemaking and Media Technology in Central Asia

Panellists:

Marc Fumagalli, Senior Advisor, Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

Nouneh Sarkissian, Executive Director, Media Initiatives Centre

Nadira Masyumova, Media Coordinator, Coalition for equality in Kyrgyzstan

Q&A

Guest Video

Closing of the session



Day 3: Friday, 9 October

09:45–10:00
(VIENNA TIME)

Participants connect via ZOOM (access link to be provided to the registered participants)

10:00–12:15

SESSION III: Response to the COVID-19 Crisis: Media Regulations, Economic Pressure and Solidarity

This session aims to discuss challenges to media freedom in Central Asia and in Mongolia, arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, including current legislation and, if applicable, individual cases, which may have a chilling effect on freedom of the media.

The global pandemic has forced the governments throughout the globe to move and restrict a number of civic freedoms, freedom of expression and freedom of the media being among them. From the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, human rights organizations in the OSCE area flagged instances where authorities introduced measures, special legislation, or decrees to restrict the rights of journalists and the media as well as the free flow of information. This prompted the mandate holders on freedom of expression of the OSCE, Harlem Désir, the United Nations, David Kaye, and of the Organization of the American States, Edison Lanza, to issue a joint statement on 19 March, calling on governments to promote and protect access to and the free flow of information during the pandemic. This statement presented some early recommendations in an early-warning spirit, in anticipation of what the COVID-19 crisis could mean for journalists and media across the OSCE region and the wider world.

The session will be streamed live and representatives of media rights organizations of all five Central Asia participating States and Mongolia will be speakers.

Moderator: Elena Cherniavska, Senior Adviser, Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

Panellists:

Tamara Kaleyeva, International Foundation for Protection of Freedom of Speech Adil Soz, Kazakhstan

Kemelbek Oishibaev, Deputy Minister of Information and Social Development, Kazakhstan

Dilya Yusupova, journalist, Kaktus Media, Kyrgyzstan

Shahlo Akobirova, Managing Director, "Khoma NGO, Tajikistan

Rahmonali Sheraliev, Head of Printing and Publication Department, Ministry of Culture, Tajikistan

Azat Seyitmuhammedov, Chief Editor, Arzuw News Agency, Turkmenistan

Sergey Naumov, Freelance Journalist, Uzbekistan

Komil Allamjonov, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Public Fund for Support and Development of National Mass Media, Uzbekistan

Gunjidmaa Gongor, Executive Director, Media Council of Mongolia

Q&A, comments from the audience

12:15–12:30

CLOSING SESSION

- Reports from plenaries
- Closing remarks

Jürgen Heissel, Director, Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

