



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Representative on Freedom of the Media
Freimut Duve

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Statement Under Current Issues
(In Written Form)

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today I would like to open with some good news. The monopoly of the centralized state Internet provider UzPAK has been abolished last week. I welcome that initiative of the Uzbek Government to lift restrictions on Internet access.

I was only the more surprised to hear that on his way back to Kyrgyzstan from the Fourth Central Asia Media Conference, which took place in Tashkent on 26-27 September, one of the participants at the Conference was beaten up by Uzbek border guards. The message given to him was to warn all journalists about the potential hazards of writing about corruption. During the assault, reference was made to articles written by Mr. Alisher Sayipov, a Kyrgyz journalist for *Voice of America*, who has been reporting on the corruption of Uzbek custom officers.

It saddens me especially as the theme of the Conference this year was freedom of the media and corruption, a highly topical and challenging subject for all OSCE participating States. I would like to reiterate the necessity of guaranteeing the safety and integrity of journalists writing about controversial and necessary topics in the entire OSCE region.