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STATEMENT **at the 2006 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**

*As for delivery by Deputy Head of the Department of the State Information Policy
and European Integration Mr. Igor Radziyevskyy*

“Securing Freedom of Speech, Mass-media, Free Access to Information and Protection of Journalists in Ukraine”

(Warsaw, 02 October 2006)

Securing freedom of speech, radical change of mutual relations between authorities and mass-media, providing clear guarantees of journalists' independence and their unimpeded activity is the significant achievement of Ukrainian society lately. The Government takes all due measures to eliminate legal, administrative and economic obstacles in mass-media activity.

However, we should admit that it is necessary to take further steps for subsequent development of free and competitive information sphere in Ukraine. As for today, the State policy in the sphere of media is concentrated on resolving of three main problems. First one is creation of public television and radio broadcasting system and denationalization of communal and state-owned mass-media. Second, providing transparency of media property and third, easing access to official information.

Foremost, the question is about introduction of the national system of public broadcasting that must strengthen Ukrainian democracy and guarantee the freedom of information in future. Open debates are underway on a public broadcasting model adapted to the Ukrainian realities. The subsequent prospects of creation of public television and radio are connected with the development of the new edition of the Law „On System of Public Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine” and Government step-by-step programme on creating public television and radio in Ukraine for 2007-2011. The sources of funding and principles of establishment of the Supervisory Boards of the public TV and radio agencies are most debatable issues today.

Another direction of actions is denationalization of communal and state-owned printed mass-media. In order to meet this need, a bill was prepared setting up the legal base for creation economically independent printed mass-media, prevention of interference in their activities by the Government and local self-government authorities, and provision of social guarantees to journalists. The project determines the way how mass-media should be reformed and foresees a gradual transition process to the new legal forms.

Special attention is devoted to creation of legal mechanisms for guaranteeing transparency of media ownership, preventing monopolization of the media market, ensuring free access to information about owners and individuals that actually control mass-media. Among some legal innovations is prohibition of establishment and activity of television and radio companies, founded and/or owned by individuals, registered in offshore zones. Besides, television and radio companies are requested to report any changes of founders and owners, division of shares of the statutory fund, changes in top management and governance bodies and sources of funding.

Ensuring free access to information is the third main problem. The Government prepared bill which foresees fundamental changes in the Law "On information", is aimed at the improvement of legal regulations on access to information, provision of openness and transparency in Government and local self-government bodies, clear observance of constitutional positions regarding the classified documents which were illegally denied access for the general public. In this context Government's draft resolution "On the Removal of Restrictions of Access to Some Acts of Cabinet of the Ministers of Ukraine, Issued in 1991-2005", has been prepared, which enabled free access to over 800 official papers.

Assistance to corporate self-organizing of journalists, in particular development of trade-unions, legalization of labour relations and journalists' payment, implementation of written contracts on core principals of editorial policies between owners, top managers and editorial board members is no less important for the Government.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion I want to emphasize that in order to ratify democratic values and freedom of speech the Government of Ukraine is set to implement decisive steps to carry out media reforms. We are ready to continue our partner dialog with international organizations, *in particular with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Mr. M.Haraszti and the OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine Mr. James F. Schumaker* to discuss all questions related to mass-media in Ukraine.

Thank you for your attention.