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DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE

Statement

**in Response to the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Harlem Désir
delivered by Ambassador Arman Kirakossian at the 1163rd Meeting of the OSCE
Permanent Council
November 09, 2017**

Mr. Chair,

I would like to warmly welcome Mr. Harlem Désir, the OSCE Representative on the Freedom of the Media and thank him for his first report to the Permanent Council.

Armenia has always valued the activities of this OSCE institution aimed at assisting participating states in ensuring freedom of expression. In this regard, we are pleased to note the important contribution of the Office of the RFOM in settling outstanding issues such as decriminalization of libel and regulation of financial fines in Armenia.

We appreciate the readiness of OSCE Representative on the Freedom of the Media to continue dialogue and cooperation with Armenia which was manifested in the recent visit of Mr. Harlem Désir to Yerevan.

We are pleased that throughout the visit Mr. Harlem Désir had opportunities to meet and discuss various issues related to relevant legislation and practice with wide range of stakeholders including Ministry of Justice, Police, Human Rights Defender and journalists.

We subscribe to the view that freedom of expression and media freedom do not undermine but strengthen security. They are indispensable part of free, secure and vibrant societies which operate on the basis of transparency, dialogue and compromise.

The freedom of expression is essential in dismantling hate narratives and propaganda of war and raising awareness on violent actions which may lead into serious security threats. Any attempt to deny access of journalists and other media workers including to conflict areas could be recognized as early warning sign in this regard.

The criminalization of the visits of journalists and other media workers to the conflict areas is illegal practice and we firmly believe that the cases similar to that of Alexander Lapshin, to which the report refers to, should not be repeated.

Armenia sees certain merits in contacts between journalists reporting on conflicts from different sides and we value the Office's expertise in this regard. However, we understand that there are also limits and the lack of freedom of expression and safety of journalists in states-parties to the conflict are certainly among those limitations.

In conclusion, let me reiterate our strong support to this mandate and readiness to closely cooperate in implementing all OSCE commitments related to the freedom of expression and media freedom.

Thank you