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PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
TO THE INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS
VIENNA

**Statement of the Delegation of Albania
on the Conference on "Freedom of Expression and Media"
Tirana, 11-12 May 2015.**

**As delivered by the Permanent Representative, Ambassador Spiro Koçi,
at the 1052nd meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
14 May 2015**

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.

I would like to inform the Council that a conference on "Freedom of Expression and Media", was held in Tirana on 11-12 May. The event was jointly organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, the Office of the Council of Europe in Tirana and civil society organizations.

The Conference discussed issues related to freedom of expression and other fundamental freedoms, such as the freedom of belief and religion, including the role of media and the other fundamental values in democratic and pluralistic societies.

In his opening statement, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania, H.E. Mr. Ditmir Bushati, highlighted the importance of media freedom in the democratic development of societies and in the continuous improvement of national democratic standards. Minister Bushati also underlined the commitment of the Government of Albania to improving the legal framework related to media freedom, as a vital instrument for the further advancing democratic governance in Albania.

Minister Bushati further noted that and I quote "For a country aiming at joining the European Union, respect for the freedom of expression and the media is a key indicator of the readiness and the democratic maturity of the candidate country. As decision- and policy-makers we are working with civil society and international partners to foster a correct understanding of freedom of expression and the media, as the basis for citizen participation in politics, as

the foundation of a democratic society, as a milestone on the road to European Union membership” end quote.

Following an invitation by my Minister, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatović addressed the media freedom conference on 11 May. She said that like many other OSCE participating States, Albania would benefit from a higher degree of media independence, emphasizing the importance of strengthening the public service broadcaster and its independence. She made references also to the antiterrorism laws, underlining that they should not hinder freedom of media. “I am glad not to have seen this happen in Albania”, she added.

During her visit, Representative Mijatović held several meetings, including with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Innovation and Public Administration, Chair and Deputy Chair of the Media Committee in the Parliament, Chair and Deputy Chair of the broadcast media regulator AMA, Chair of the board of public service broadcaster RTSH, journalists and members of civil society.

The visit of Representative Mijatovic to Tirana provided an opportunity for the Albanian authorities and the Office of the Representative to review their existing co-operation and explore ways to strengthen our interaction with a view to improving the standards of media freedom in Albania.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize once again the excellent relationship between Albania and the office of the OSCE RFoM. As we increasingly benefit from the outstanding expertise of the Office of Representative Mijatovic, we are fully committed to pursuing our cooperative relationship in the coming future.

I thank you for your attention.