

SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENT BY THE TURKISH DELEGATION

SUPPLEMENTARY HUMAN DIMENSION MEETING

***FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA:
PROTECTION OF JOURNALISTS AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION
(13-14 JULY 2006, VIENNA)
Session II***

Mr. Moderator,

As I took the floor, with your indulgence, I will make a few comments on the debate:

First of all, I should say that I very much felt sympathetic to Mr. Momani's personal experience in which he has to face serious challenges for doing his job as a journalist, and I admire his courage. On the other hand, we have to understand that Mr. Momani, unlike Jyllands Posten's journalists, is using his courage and his professional ethics to question the values imposed upon him from above and the rules of the game within which he has to operate – very much like Voltaire challenged the conventional thinking and religious dogma. Offending, disturbing and shocking are justified when they serve higher moral ideals of humanity as our guest cartoonists illustrated in a lively fashion. On the contrary, offending and insulting vulnerable and marginalized communities is wrong and at times dangerous depending on the level of grievances.

Secondly, I should like to argue that criticism of the content of a published public statement, be it an article, a piece of art or a cartoon, by public officials or governments cannot be construed as an intervention in the media freedom. Indeed, in polarized societies where a variety of communities live side by side, a responsible political leader would speak out against stereotypes, stigmatization and xenophobic elements in public discourse.

Finally, I would like to join Mr. Krezeminski in his question whether we should check from time to time where the limits of our freedoms lie. Our societies change; the role of religion in our societies change. This is not a suggestion to restrict freedoms but to discuss the changing relationships between different freedoms.

Thank you.