

Delegation of Norway

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ROBERT KVILE,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NORWAY, AT THE
956th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

13 June 2013

**In response to the statement by Ms. Dunja Mijatović,
OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media**

Mr. Chairperson,

I too would like to welcome the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatović, to the Permanent Council and thank her for her high-quality informative report.

Both the written report, which we received a few days ago, and her opening statement today are testimony to her great commitment and intensive activity. Her report underscores the fact that the most important tasks of the OSCE are carried out by the institutions and missions and not by us here in the Permanent Council.

Freedom of speech is under fire in several OSCE participating States, both to the east and to the west of Vienna. This fact gives us cause for concern. Freedom of speech and free and independent media are a prerequisite for any democracy. Without freedom of speech, other fundamental freedoms such as freedom of assembly are also restricted.

The pressure on freedom of speech is also connected with the development in several participating States towards less democracy, less openness and increased authoritarian tendencies. The pressure is, however, also connected with the challenges posed by new media, since the Internet is unfortunately also used to disseminate hate speech and racist comments. The Internet serves as an important tool for terrorist networks and criminals.

For the younger generation the Internet is the most important mass medium. It is here that they search for information and it is here that they express their opinions. It is here that they exercise their democratic rights. Therefore, our position is clear. Democracy and tolerance can be defended only by democratic means. We cannot counter the attack on democracy by restricting fundamental freedoms. Democracy is the loser if we do so.

Last year, we were unsuccessful in our attempt to confirm the commitment to our fundamental principles in the case of the introduction of new technologies. Ultimately, these efforts failed because we were unable to agree on how the term mass medium was to be

defined. In this way, we effectively exclude our Organization from the discussion as to how our society should develop. And in this way, we make ourselves look ridiculous in front of our children.

We should venture a fresh attempt at reaching an agreement on this matter in time for the Ministerial Council meeting in Kyiv.

Mr. Chairperson,

Dunja Mijatović and her institution serve as our Organization's watchdog when it comes to freedom of speech. And this is precisely the role we expect her to play. We expect her to exercise her responsibility to monitor that we, the OSCE participating States, fulfil our commitments.

It has been argued on a number of occasions that the Media Representative has overstepped the limits of her mandate. I do not share this view. I am in favour of an active and courageous Media Representative. It is for that reason that the independence of the Representative on Freedom of the Media is also an important principle for us.

Mr. Chairperson,

If fundamental freedoms come under fire in our own countries, we must ensure that the Media Representative has all the resources she needs to live up to our expectations. In the 2014 Programme Outline she requested the establishment of two new posts. Norway supports this proposal. It is also one of the countries that makes an extrabudgetary contribution. We should like to continue in this way.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.