



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement Commending Macedonia for the Decriminalization of Defamation

As delivered by Counselor for Public Affairs Christopher Midura
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 15, 2012

The United States welcomes the adoption on November 12 of a law decriminalizing defamation in Macedonia. The country's new civil law regulating insult and defamation removes speech offenses from the Criminal Code. While full implementation of the law and concrete results remain key, we note that this marks a significant step toward a safer and more free media environment in Macedonia, and serves as a positive example for the OSCE region as a whole.

The United States fully concurs with OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatovic that "journalists must be able to perform their jobs and encourage debate on issues of public interest without fear of criminal sanctions or undue civil damages." We urge all OSCE participating States that have not done so to decriminalize defamation and to repeal statutes that unduly punish "insult" or other expressions of opinion.

The United States also echoes Representative Mijatovic's call for Macedonia to take the further steps necessary to improve its media climate by encouraging greater media pluralism and transparency of ownership. The Broadcasting Council must operate in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner. Moreover, it must address the challenges related to the labor rights of media workers and transparent government advertising.

Continued improvements in the area of media freedom will contribute substantially to the consolidation and vitality of democracy in Macedonia.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.