

Delegation of Switzerland

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF SWITZERLAND
AT THE 2010 OSCE REVIEW CONFERENCE**

Warsaw, 7 October 2010

**Forward-looking discussions
Working session 1: Freedom of media**

Mr. Chairperson,

The existence of free media capable of reflecting the plurality of views in a country is an essential prerequisite for any democracy; the media contribute to the dissemination of a plurality of opinions and the promotion of cultural diversity, dialogue and tolerance, principles that are essential for the defence of all other rights.

Violations continue today in several OSCE participating States, however, and are even increasing.

The traditional obstacles to freedom of the media have not disappeared and there are numerous additional limitations imposed as a result of political or technological developments. Vigilance is thus imperative.

Switzerland is particularly concerned by the question of violence directed against journalists, which all too often remains unpunished. As long as journalists are harassed or murdered because of their activities, freedom of the press will remain an empty promise.

It is therefore vital that States undertake to systematically investigate all attacks and threats to journalists and to bring the offenders to justice; they should also take all necessary measures without delay to prevent such acts.

As for the working conditions, journalists must be able to play their role independently and in complete safety.

- First of all there are crisis situations, where we would emphasize our view that freedom of expression offers an early warning to decision-makers and those in positions of responsibility with respect to potential conflicts. Freedom of the press is a key factor in the promotion of peace or the establishment of confidence-building measures in tense situations.

- In an election context, it should be recalled that free and regular elections are not possible unless the electorate has adequate access to a diversity of information. The restrictions imposed in some countries on free media during elections puts harmful limits on the exercise of freedom of information.

It is thus vital to support the independence and autonomy of local media and to encourage them to disseminate unbiased information. The development of self-regulating mechanisms should be fostered. Ad hoc control bodies on press coverage can thus be established during elections or in periods of crisis.

This debate is all the more important with the appearance of new technologies. Blogs and other social networks can enhance transparency, but bloggers are nevertheless not safe from persecution. As long as States endeavour to unduly limit or control Internet access, free circulation of ideas will not be possible.

In conclusion, the violence and intimidation that we have spoken of here affect not only the victims but also the population as a whole, which is deprived of sources of information. This violence and intimidation constitute a denial of democracy and the values that unite us all here.

Thank you.